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BOOKS ON THE SEA
BY A. K. K. K.

ON THE HIGH SEAS

BOOKS ON THE SEA

By E. KEBLE CHATTERTON

SAILING SHIPS AND THEIR STORY
SHIPS AND WAYS OF OTHER DAYS
FORE AND AFT: THE STORY OF THE
FORE AND AFT RIG

THE STORY OF THE BRITISH NAVY

KING'S CUTTERS AND SMUGGLERS

STEAMSHIPS AND THEIR STORY

THE ROMANCE OF THE SHIP

THE ROMANCE OF PIRACY

Q-SHIPS AND THEIR STORY

THE OLD EAST INDIAMEN

THE ROMANCE OF SEA ROVERS

THE MERCANTILE MARINE

THE AUXILIARY PATROL

SHIP MODELS

WHALERS AND WHALING

CHATS ON NAVAL PRINTS

THE SHIP UNDER SAIL

STEAMSHIP MODELS

BATTLES BY SEA

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THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE SEA

CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH

OLD SHIP PRINTS

VENTURES AND VOYAGES

OLD SEA PAINTINGS

CRUISES

DOWN CHANNEL IN THE VIVETTE

THROUGH HOLLAND IN THE VIVETTE





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HURRICANE

ON THE HIGH SEAS

By
E. KEBLE CHATTERTON



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PREFACE

THIS is a collection of yarns concerning ships, men, and the sea, intended for those readers who in this modern age still find that no fascination can compare with marine adventure, even when experienced in the comfort of an arm-chair. Not all the glorious achievements in the sky can ever take away that unique character which pertains to everything maritime.

In the following chapters will be found all the thrill and suspense, the drama and daring, of imaginative fiction: yet, for all that, every episode is true, and every character actually lived. Thus we are dealing with naval history in its widest and most entertaining aspect. The subjects range from incredible stories of escape to mutiny, exploration, slavers, pirates, and high adventure in war as well as in peace.

But an effort has been made to do more than make an appeal to the emotions. For herein are to be found constructive pictures of life at sea in the old wooden ships. It is thus possible to see with the eyes of our imagination the environment of the old-time sailor during his

long voyages across the world. We are able to share with some intimacy his hopes and fears, his perils and bravery. We learn to understand his seamanship, his technique, and his vocabulary.

The period begins with the dawn of the seventeenth century and goes down to include some of the amazing and not universally known sea episodes which happened during the Great War. And some of this detail has been obtained at first hand.

E. KEBLE CHATTERTON.

CHAPTER I

DEEP SEA ROVING

It is one of the characteristics belonging to progress that the tendency is always in the direction of sub-division and separation, and even with regard to that most conservative of all occupations, known as seafaring, can this be stated with considerable truth : yet there is still a wide gulf between the sailor and the landsman, and there has not, with the advance of time's rude hand, been quite the distinct dividing up into non-communicating categories which one finds in most walks of life.

There is an extraordinarily close connection, and there is a strong mutual respect, between, let us say, a trawler skipper and an admiral commanding a battle squadron ; and the reason is found in that common denominator the sea, which is the eternal enemy of them both. Thus sailorhood always has been the most perfect democracy which the world has ever seen, and, in spite of human petty jealousies and misunderstandings, there is far

more sense of community between fishermen, mercantile crews, naval ratings, master mariners, and naval officers than is noticeable ashore in the world of industry or commerce.

In past centuries this sense of maritime solidarity was even stronger, and there was one great composite seafaring character which occasionally specialised, yet was still basically unaltered. The same man between youth and old age not infrequently played the parts of honest fisherman, predatory pirate, sea-rover, privateer, explorer, and man-of-war in a royal ship. It was all the same to him, so long as he got his food, his pay, and the thrill of living. Geography and political events had much to do with the determining of a lad's career. If, for instance, he happened to have been born during the Middle Ages in one of the Cinque Ports, he could hardly have failed to specialise in piracy, seeing that the narrow neck of the English Channel at its eastern end was a highway for traffic from Ireland, the Mediterranean, and France : but also because the Cinque Ports men were specifically allowed (according to Matthew of Paris) to plunder as they pleased all such vessels as were not English.

To us moderns it seems strange that this privilege should have been permitted, yet we

suffer dishonest financial company promoters to rob their fellow-citizens with surprising persistency. And the Channel pirates were a kind of permanent naval reserve, always ready to fight the naval battles against their King's enemies. When there was a dull season in piracy, or hostilities, the crews could devote themselves to the fisheries. The only way to create a navy, either for fighting or trading purposes, is to induce men to use the sea, and when the fishing was bad in times of peace it was scarcely possible to prevent starving men from roving about the Narrow Seas obtaining what they could. To their primitive minds it was but right that they should take every advantage of what chance so graciously held out. And this same attitude is not quite dead. The English or Scottish fisherman has his own moral code, and the Irishman has his. Of the latter I can relate the following instance.

During the Great War a valuable Atlantic steamship had the misfortune to get ashore off a lonely Irish island, inhabited only by a few families of fishermen-farmers who had lived there in a clan for generations. It was a little kingdom of its own, with not a policeman, magistrate, or coastguard. The only persons in authority were the old men and the one priest.

Such a community, living its own life away from the influences affecting the rest of the world, must of necessity become self-contained, self-reliant, hard-working, but suspicious and disregarding of outside persons or powers. These islanders were brave and splendid seamen, and I have seen them often far out into the Atlantic in bad weather, handling their little craft magnificently.

Fortunately, after an exciting time, the crew of the wrecked steamer were taken off, but she had broken her back and her holds were full of a rich cargo. What ensued was that the islanders swooped down, brought ashore all the cargo they could, and also went down into the engine-room and cabins, there to help themselves to brass taps, copper piping, bits of machinery, and anything that could be removed. These parts were then packed in barrels, the fishermen sailed the barrels in their boats across to the mainland, and were about to despatch them to a resident in Wales when an examination of the barrels brought about the crisis. On landing at the island, and talking to the natives by the waterside, of course one drew negative information. Ascending to the hills and calling at the cottages, one obtained a similar result. And then on a certain day I

came across the priest of the island, and placed the matter squarely before him as the acknowledged supreme authority here. Was it right that an unfortunate ship which had got ashore in thick weather should be robbed of her contents? Was it honest or lawful?

The answer came thus: 'No: and I've told them they shouldn't do it. But their reply is that God has brought them a present to the island in the shape of this steamer, and if they didn't make use of the opportunity, sure and they'd never have any more luck at all, nor deserve it. 'Tisn't stealing, Commander, it's just taking what's given you.'

Against this primitive philosophy it was waste of time to argue, but it was in accord with that of most English fishermen several centuries back. The livelihood of fishing is itself an adventure to this day, for there is not the regularity either of remuneration or of routine that are features of most avocations. The fishing-grounds have to be located, and the catch taken, not according to any trade regulation, but as long as the fish remain and there is room for them aboard. And bad weather still further accentuates the uncertainty of the adventuring. In this way during past generations, as well as in our

present civilised condition, fishermen have always been a race apart from other citizens. And it is from this roving family that the navies and mercantile marines have sprung. To this day the great fishing-ports are the best sources for obtaining aspirants to serve in war-ships or commercial steamships. The herring throughout history has played a far greater part than many people suspect. Not merely did it build up the wealth and sea strength of Holland, and so enable the Dutch East Indies to be obtained, but it was the means of providing the men who were to form the crews in the ships which explored and afterwards colonised North America.

From time immemorial the North Sea fishing has gone on with varying success, and even before the Wars of the Roses as many as 220 vessels used to sail from Yarmouth after the herring. Conversely, fishing was affected not merely by political but by religious movements, and the Reformation was a serious set-back. The law of the Church specifying certain days of abstinence from flesh food became so neglected that as early as the reign of Edward VI a law of Parliament selected Fridays, Saturdays, Ember Days, and Lent to be observed as fish days, with a view to assisting the men who

relied on nets and lines for their living. It was only the example of the successful Dutch that finally showed the necessity of adequate capital expenditure if the Englishmen were to have enough big fishing busses to cope with their foreign rivals. But property is the magnet which attracts thieves, and there are plenty of instances where a cargo of fish has been the bait for pirates. In the month of June 1395, for example, an English vessel full of salt fish, representing a combined value of £170, was captured off the Danish coast by pirates, who slew the master and every one of the crew. And there were periods when safe-conducts must needs be granted by governments to fishing-boats of other nations.

By the beginning of the seventeenth century the Dutch had so gone ahead with their fishing that there were two thousand busses employed following the herring from Scotland down to Norfolk from June to November, just as the Scottish steam drifters do to this day. At that time English fishermen were content chiefly to wait till the catch arrived off their own harbours, and thus by lack of enterprise allowed wealth to go abroad. But at length it began to be realised that the sea was a silver mine, that it was a treasury out of which naval power

could be paid for, and so there came the foundation of fishery companies, just as steam-trawler corporations exist in the present time. Besides the west-countrymen, who sent bigger ships to work off the Newfoundland coast, the men of the Cinque Ports and East Anglia were sending fleets to the North Sea and Icelandic waters.

Sir William Monson (1568–1643), that distinguished captain and traveller, was one of those who from their expert knowledge anxiously strove to build up English fishing as a great industry that could compete with the Dutch. For there was a great demand from Italy and Spain and southern France which Holland was supplying, and might just as well have been filled by English ships. A 250-ton vessel would be able to take out south £1,600 worth of fish consisting of pilchards, red herrings and other varieties, which would be sure to find a good market if they reached the Mediterranean before Lent. But the best fish for the London market was caught in the English Channel off Rye.

‘Husbandmen and fishermen,’ emphasised Monson, ‘are the upholders of commonwealths; all other people live by their labours. They are stewards to provide sustenance to feed on. And yet comparing them together there is

great difference betwixt their lives and pains : the husbandman's work is without danger or hazard, and if he be wet he has present help of fire to dry him. He is allowed a bed instead of the other's board to lie on : his diet is certain, and in a quiet manner, when the others are tossed to and fro without a steadfast standing. If the one be cold he may recover himself with exercise and work ; if the other be cold he is made colder, his labour being in cold water. The one keeps his certain hours for sleep, the other has no certain time to rest, but must attend his danger, which he is never free from. Every hour he must be ready to look out for his shoal of fish, and watch his opportunity of weather and tide to take them. The one has pleasure on holidays and is free from labour ; all days are alike to the other, and the Sunday can give no more content or comfort than the rest of the week. What heart can be so hardened, or pirates so pitiless, as to disturb those harmless and innocent creatures that make pain their pleasure, and their labour their country's plenty, procuring good for it by their own toils ? '

In Elizabethan times piracy on the high seas had reached so serious a height that the Queen in 1564 ordered Sir Peter Carew to clear the

Devonshire and Cornish seas of these marauders. Not merely once did the Spanish King demand of her that a convicted English pirate should never be pardoned, but it was almost impossible to stop such activity when so much profit accrued. Had not the Mayor and citizens of Dover taken six hundred prizes from the French and sixty-one from the Spaniards? And there were some arch-pirates cruising about, such as Robert Hitchins, Philip Readhead, Roger Shaster, Richard Deigle; whilst men like Clinton were caught and hanged at Wapping. One known as Fleming was another notorious Channel pirate and very much 'wanted': but, on the approach of the Armada, he was so patriotic a pirate that he sailed into Plymouth and brought such reliable news to the English commander-in-chief as to earn both pardon and reward.

The end of the Tudor period rather propagated piracy than discouraged it: for during the Spanish crisis the Navy of England was able to employ most of these molesters. But when once again the latter found themselves without a job, or could not get money due to them, they became discontented and went in for piracy whole-heartedly. Some joined up with the Moors who infested the north African

waters, but others hovered about off the British Isles. And thus, when merchant-adventurers, or expedition-leaders, had discharged crews without full payment it was scarcely surprising that seamen would band themselves together, hang about the sea-highways, overpower whatever came along, and capture such valuable commodities as cochineal, herrings, wool, silks, gold, silver, pearls, precious stones, saffron, wine, hides, cheese, cloth, and plate. Such out-of-the-way havens as the south-west of Ireland were used for disposing of the plunder. But it is to be noted that as a rule these pirates were so full of patriotism that they would betray each other rather than their country to its foreign enemy. Such a man was John Callis, who used to sail about off the Welsh coast, and the south-west of England. And of course Martin Frobisher was an out-and-out pirate, who, in spite of his illiteracy and rough character, became an admiral and a knight, to say nothing of being a great explorer. So, too, that thorough patriot and expert in seamanship, Sir Henry Mainwaring, was not merely a notorious pirate for one portion of his career, but wrote a most valuable treatise on the subject. He said that he 'fell not purposely, but by mischance' into piracy: that is to say, the conclusion

of peace with Spain in 1604 threatened his maritime occupation. Ten years later he was recognised as one of the leading 'gentlemen' pirates who made the seas of western Europe scarcely passable. By 1617 he had amassed so much riches that he could afford to petition a pardon. More than likely he paid cash for this privilege of forgiveness, and his knight-hood came to him in the following year.

Moral standards are not movable tests, but rigid and unadaptable. No amount of rhetoric can change piracy into honest living. But we who live in the present age can well appreciate the mitigating circumstances in that trying period of anti-climax which followed the Spanish hostilities. The very officers and men who had saved the nation were now by the nation unwanted. So, after the Great War, many a British naval officer and man found himself without a berth, drifted abroad, or engaged in rum-running, or went to sea in any old ship that could be found. It was the same with some of the ablest German naval officers. Rum-running into Sweden, potato-growing, sailing round the world in small craft—any occupation had to be grasped because their country no longer had need of them. But had piracy still been winked at, are we

quite sure that European sailors in the twentieth century would not have employed themselves as our ancestors did three hundred years ago?

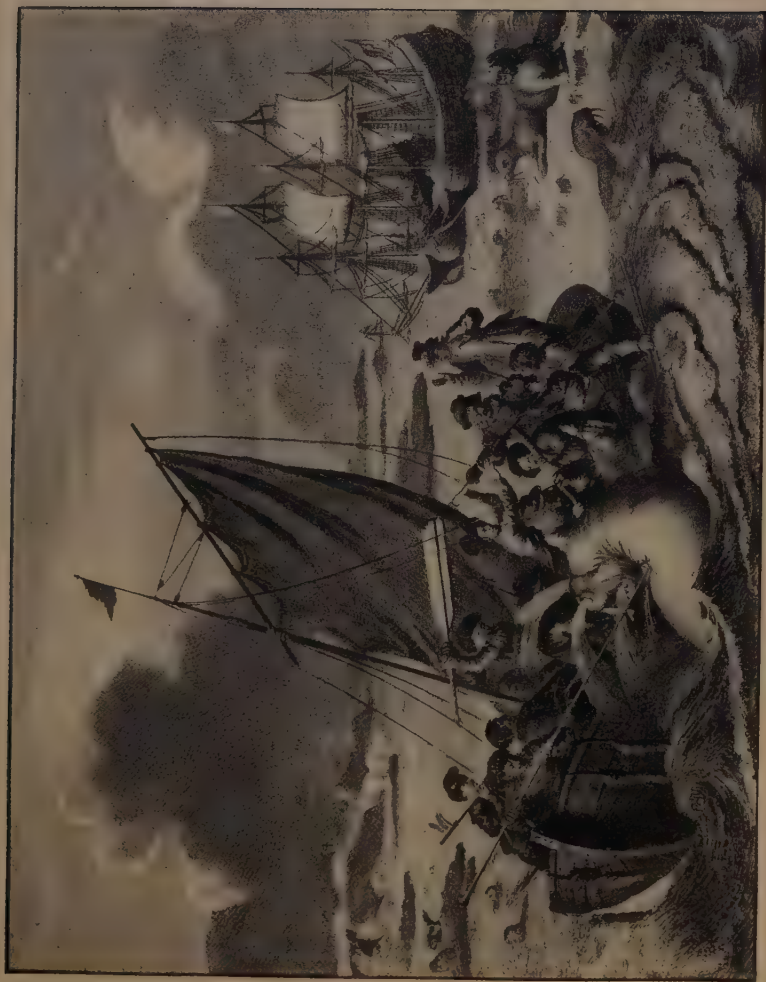
Monson, who had been sent in 1614 to suppress piracy off the Irish coast, tells a good yarn which well illustrates the mentality of the fisherman type who might become a plunderer any day. On his return to England Monson sent a vessel to Irish waters that he might be informed as to whether certain drastic measures, including the death penalty, had been efficacious. Now in the first harbour this ship found 'a pirate named Tucker, a seaman bred from his youth, and continual practice made him excellent in his art and profession.' A very wily old sea-dog was Tucker. He made himself extraordinarily pleasant to Monson's representative, with a view to suggesting that he was quite a good fellow really and well deserving of a pardon, 'though,' adds Monson caustically, 'he departed with the best part of the spoils he had aboard him, which were things of value.'

So successfully had Tucker hypnotised the visitor that the latter, instead of obeying orders and sailing to inspect the north Irish coast, came back home in a hurry with Tucker's

letter and a handsome present to Monson. But the latter knew the roving pirate mind too well, and sent several ships to find Tucker, who, however, had to leave the neighbourhood and scurry right away up the Atlantic to the northernmost part of those precipitous Faroe Islands, where safe harbours are few and the tides are fierce.

In this lonely spot he came across another pirate, equally notorious, though less honest, who passed under the name of Monnocho. The two consorted together, but Tucker's ship got wrecked off the Faroe coast. Thereupon Monnocho, instead of rendering assistance, 'played the part of a hawk over his prey,' took possession of the wreck, helped himself to all its illicit wealth, and made prisoners of the crew. But after a while Monnocho feared that all this crowd on board might lead to a mutiny, so he transferred them to another vessel which had been captured from an English fisherman.

Monson had nothing but contempt for Monnocho, who had once been a surgeon's mate in a pinnace serving under the former, and had preferred piracy. Some time after Tucker and Monnocho had separated, each ship again seeking spoil, the latter fell in with a Danish



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WHALING AND SEALING IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY



vessel off the Faroes and there ensued a fight. Monnocho was defeated, arrested, carried to Denmark, and hanged at the gallows, where his corpse remained as a warning to other delinquents. As for Tucker, he continued during a further period to tyrannise the poor fishermen, until the latter made such a stout surprise that they boarded Tucker's ship, slew or wounded the pirate crew, and took Tucker prisoner, whom they brought ashore into the hands of justice. The result was that Tucker was conveyed to the Marshalsea prison, where he daily awaited the destiny of death. His appeal to Monson, and his strong protestation of penitence, moved Sir William to obtain pardon and liberty. For this the ex-pirate showed sincere gratitude, but his credit was gone and he was without capital to start honest trading again. Monson accordingly gave back to him most of the present sent from Ireland, and wished him good fortune.

Tucker was now able to sail across to Denmark and resume a trade previously relinquished, and then by the circuitous movement of fate he met with doom. For, in the course of his now honest business he happened to be passing one of the Danish rivers when he was suddenly recognised by a ferryman who was

rowing him across. It happened that not so long ago this boatman had been one of those taken captive by Tucker at sea ; but now, by a quick catastrophic turn, the drama was to end differently. The ferryman landed Tucker, hastened off to obtain a warrant from a magistrate for Tucker's arrest, and this brought about rigorous justice. For Tucker was tried, condemned to death, and hoisted up at the gibbet close to where Monnocho's body was still swaying in the wind. Thus by inexorable destiny both pirates received their punishment in due course.

In this early seventeenth century the neighbourhood of the Faroes and Iceland was already so popular with fishermen that from the north and east coast of England alone there used to sail 150 vessels every year, giving employment to 2,500 seamen, who were a fine lot of hefty fellows and could be drafted into the Navy at the approach of war. As to the finance of this business, we can get some idea from the following items. A herring buss, as we know from the Dutch paintings still preserved in the galleries of Holland, was a vessel of a powerful beamy type, with three masts and a squaresail on each. According to the contemporary Keymor, busses were of 60 to 200 tons, and

carried from forty to a hundred lasts, each last representing two tons of fish. The cost of a buss of the thirty-to-forty last size, fresh from the builder's yard, complete with nets, gear, salt, casks, and all other charges amounted to about £700. She was thus ready for sea, and required only the following provisions for the crew to keep them during four months' fishing: Beer, £16; bread, £12; butter, bacon, cheese, etc., £20. These fishermen were rather thirsty people, and the allowance of beer to each man daily was a gallon. Their wages were not paid till the end of the voyage. In Holland the cautious parents were so sure of the busses making a handsome profit that even the children's money was thus invested.

When in 1585 hostilities opened with Spain, Elizabeth sent certain vessels to capture such of the enemy's ships as were fishing off Newfoundland, and this clever move not merely robbed the foe of both craft and valuable food supplies, but enabled the area in the future to be rid of Biscayan and Portuguese ships. But in the early years of the seventeenth century the Dutch began to find their way to Newfoundland, so that from 1620 onwards there were twelve or fourteen ships from Holland which used to come over and buy fish

from the Englishmen there working. Six years later west-country fishing vessels bound to Newfoundland from Weymouth, Dartmouth, and Plymouth were compelled to suffer losses from pirates, who haunted the western approaches to the English Channel. Going to sea at this time was no small risk, for there were corsairs working out of Dunkirk, and sometimes, also, the pirates from the Barbary coast came right up from the Mediterranean as far north as the south-west of Ireland.

And it is in connection with these Barbary pirates that an interesting revelation has recently come to light, which proves that even in naval matters history goes on repeating itself. Soon after my volume, *Q-Ships and Their Story*, appeared in 1922 there arose a discussion as to whether the British Navy had previously employed systematic disguise in warfare. It has now been definitely established¹ that this procedure took place as far back as the seventeenth century. In January 1673 an agreement was made by the Crown with Phineas Pett to build a fourth-rate ship after the manner of a fly-boat—that is to say, she was to be a warship constructed to resemble a typical merchant vessel. She was to have collapsible bulwarks,

¹ See *The Times Literary Supplement*, February 28, 1929.

a detachable head, and generally be able to disguise her warlike identity.

Her name was the *Kingfisher*, and it was intended originally to build her at Ipswich, but permission was afterwards given for this to be done at Woodbridge, that secluded village up the River Deben. She was a long time being created, for in April 1675 orders were given : ‘Hasten the flute that is building by Mr. Pett at Woodbridge.’¹ A year later she was still on the stocks, and it was decided to sheath her partly before being launched, but to complete that job after she had come into the river. By March of that year, 1675–6, she was finished, and Captain John Kirke, one of the Master Attendants at Chatham, her commanding officer, was ordered to fetch her from Woodbridge. She was afterwards sent to the Mediterranean as a mystery ship against the Barbary pirates, for which purpose she had been expressly made. The *King* was very much interested in her, and at the beginning of May that year went on Sunday to inspect this ship, ‘that has been lately built to cheat the Turks. She is built like a fly-boat, and to outward appearance looks

¹ *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Naval Manuscripts in the Pepysian Library at Magdalene Library, Cambridge* (London, 1923), Vol. IV.

like a ship of 150 tons, but is in reality 600 tons, and carries 40 guns and 200 men, and is a most excellent sailer.'

Now during the Great War many of us passing a 'Q' (or mystery) ship at sea were fooled by the perfect disguise; and precisely the same thing happened with regard to the *Kingfisher's* beholders. One day the master mariner, named Clarke, who was in command of the merchantman *Thomas* of London, homeward bound from the Mediterranean, sighted her and determinedly declined to 'strike' sail to her. The result was that he was summoned before the Admiralty 'to answer to an information touching his having neglected to pay his duty as he ought to do to His Majesty's flag on the ship *Kingfisher*, and it being found that he did strike to the said ship but that there had passed very provoking words on both sides between the King's officers and the said master, he the said master was excused and discharged.'

There is a delightful picture suggested here, as we imagine two irate commanding officers shaking their fists across the sea and filling the air with seventeenth-century oaths!

CHAPTER II

THE SEA LIFE

GOING to sea has been so different an experience in successive eras that, in order to get an accurate picture of the conditions, it is necessary to select some definite generation : since after mediæval times, when ocean voyages and ship improvements gradually became more frequent, one innovation followed another so closely that it is difficult to mark the dividing lines. Nowadays so keen an interest is taken in the old ships that we would pursue our inquiries a little further and see how officers and men fared on the high seas. And it will be well if we choose as our period the first quarter of the seventeenth century, since it is that midway stage between the early Tudor crude efforts and the late Stuart stabilisation of ship construction and equipment.

It was a time when there were very few real seamen in England, though about 1620 there was still alive and growing a seamanhood which was soon to accomplish great

things by the regular voyages to the East Indies, the North American colonies and in the Anglo-Dutch wars. The difficulty was that so few of the captains or commanding officers (who were so often the shipowners) knew anything about handling vessels, or still less of the art of navigation. They had approached the subject from the attitude of a soldier, yet there was so much technical detail for the military mind first to acquire, before it could ever be respected by sailor men, that these captains, with their swaggering ignorance, were the cause of endless friction on board. As Sir Henry Mainwaring himself complained about the year 1621, 'Very few gentlemen (though they be called seamen) do fully and wholly understand what belongs to their profession; having only some scrambling [i.e. bungling] terms and names belonging to some parts of a ship. But he who will teach another man must understand things plainly and distinctly himself; that instead of resolving another man's doubts, he do not puzzle him with more confusion of terms of art. . . . If any will tell me why the vulgar sort of seamen hate landmen so much, either he or I may give the reason why they are so unwilling to teach them in their

Art : whence it is that so many gentlemen go long voyages and return, in a manner, so ignorant and as unable to do their Country service as when they went out.' ' Were it not ridiculous,' he adds, ' for a man (speaking of the wars) to call a trench a ditch ; or at sea, the starboard and larboard, the right and left side of a ship ? '

We must picture our seventeenth-century ship to be three-masted, square-rigged on fore and main, but with a lateen sail on the mizzen. She is bowling along over the Atlantic with a quartering wind that fills her forecourse, foretopsail, and fore-t'gallant sail. The mainsail, with its topsail and t'gallant showing up against the blue sky, is bellying out as if to burst ; and the quadrilateral-shaped mizzen-sail, whose mast comes up through the poop-deck, keeps her well up to the breeze. Fixed to the top of the poop and projecting over the stern aft is a piece of timber some two or three yards in length, called an ' outlicker,' or, as we should call it to-day, an ' outrigger.'

At the outermost end of this short spar there was a hole through which the standing-part of the mizzen-sheet was made fast. This rope was then rove through the blocks and led on board. By this means the mizzen-sail

could be hauled or slacked, the whole idea of the outlicker being to allow the sheet to be hauled flat, and thus help the ship, when sailing as near to the wind as she would, make good. In the biggest ships an outlicker was not necessary, for the mizzen-mast was not placed quite so far aft. The foremast was noticeably placed right in the very eyes of the ship, so that all foremast sails, and the little square spritsail which hung below the bowsprit, could counteract the lateen mizzen and keep the vessel away from the wind. The rule was to have the mizzen-sail cut by the leech (or after-edge of the canvas) twice as deep as the mast was long from the deck to hounds (i.e. to the top of the mast); whilst the formula for the spritsail was to make it three-quarters as deep as the foresail.

The length of the masts was proportioned by the ship's beam, which in turn was determined by the length of the keel. Usually it worked out that the main-yard was five-sixths of the keel, the topsail-yard three-sevenths of the main-yard, and the fore-yard four-fifths of the main-yard. As to the decks, there were (reckoning from the lowest) three—viz. the orlop, the lower gun-deck, and the upper gun-deck, but known sometimes as the



A FULL-RIGGED SHIP OF THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY



first, second, or third deck respectively. The half-deck extended from abaft the mainmast, and the quarter-deck extended abaft the steerage to the master's cabin or round-house, which was the uppermost room of the ship's stern.

In the hold, which was the whole space between the keelson and the orlop-deck, were stowed all the victuals—the stores, the cargo, the fresh water in barrels, the beer. It was divided into several rooms by bulkheads to make the boatswain's store, the steward's room, and the powder-room. The bulkheads were just boards, and were used also for separating off the half-deck, for instance. On the orlop-deck were the lazarette, stowage for cables and spare gear, whilst for'ard under the fo'c's'le was the crew's space. These cables were three-strand rope, the best being made of the whitest stuff obtained from the Mediterranean, though they were rather stiff and therefore awkward for getting a turn round the bitts. The bitter-end was that end of the cable which was inboard and still at the bitts when the ship lay at anchor. When that part of the cable got worn which was bent on to the anchor, they used to turn it end for end. These bitts were merely two square pieces of timber which stood

erect and were placed well abaft of the hawse-pipes, being used solely for the purpose of belaying the cable when anchored. The bitts were fastened in the hold to 'riders,' or great timbers, which were bolted on other timbers for additional strength. But whilst riders made a weak ship stronger, they were rather a nuisance in merchantmen, since they interfered with the stowage of casks in the hold. A middle bar of timber connected as a cross-piece with the two horizontal bitts. In exceptionally heavy gales the cable was made fast to the mainmast, lest the heavy strain and pitching should pull the bows out of the ship—an experience that was not unique.

On the lower gun-deck, looking from aft, the tiller from the rudder came in through the gunner's store-room; and the whipstaff, or vertical rod, came up through a slit into the steerage, where one hand worked it athwart ship as ordered by the officer on the quarter-deck, who shouted his orders to the man below, as the latter stood on the upper gun-deck. Thus the steersman could not observe the sea or have anything of a look-out: all that he could notice was the leech of the sails on fore and main masts, and so tell if the ship was too near the wind or not. In that steerage-room was

kept a traverse-board, which was marked with the thirty-two points of the compass and little holes on every point. This was, in effect, an account of the ship's progress, for the helmsman kept the 'score' by sticking a pin at each respective point to record each glass. These hour-glasses were turned every half-hour and the ship's bell rung. Thus, supposing the vessel had been heading S.W. for two hours and then altered course to south for one hour, the steersman would stick a peg abreast of the point S.W. but at the fourth hole, and abreast of the point south at the second hole. By this means the master, who could not be expected to watch the course all the while, could work out the dead reckoning at any time. The marking was done after the practice in the card-game known in those days as 'noddy,' a kind of cribbage.

The whipstaff had a ring at the lower end which worked on the tiller. The rowl was that slit through which the whipstaff came up into the steerage. But in the biggest ships the whipstaff was not used, for the weight of the rudder and the action of the water thereon during heavy weather were too great to allow the steering thus to be controlled; and it was not convenient for more than one man to stand at the whip.

Continuing our way along the lower gun-deck, we come to a space for the crew and the lower main capstan, which went through the upper gun-deck also. It was used for such jobs as weighing anchor, hoisting and striking top-masts, hoisting guns aboard, or any heavy articles. This capstan was always placed vertically abaft the mainmast, the foot standing in a step on the lower deck and the head being between the two upper decks. For'ard of the after-bulkhead on each side would be observed the lower guns. Hammocks had been introduced into Europe by Columbus after having seen the West Indians use them ; but it was a century that elapsed before they were regularly adopted in English ships, and the crew used to sleep on the lower gun-deck, making themselves as comfortable as they knew how on the hard wood. Ladders connected this deck with the upper gun-deck, and the opening for the great hatch was for'ard of the mainmast.

Between the mainmast and foremast was placed the jeer-capstan's base, which rose vertically in a manner similar to the main capstan. The jeer was a three-strand rope made fast to the main-yard in the case of big ships, and was led through a block that was seized close to the top of the mast, then down

again through another block at the foot of the mast on deck, and so it could be led to the jeer-capstan. Big ships had one jeer on each side of the mast, the use being for the purpose of hoisting up the yard and to support it should the ties carry away. The jeer was always brought to this capstan, and at the base of the latter 'whelps' or brackets were added to the body of the capstan, so that the cable might not be so apt to surge, as it would be if it ran on a perfectly round surface. The capstan bars were made of small bits of timber and fitted into the square holes of the capstan barrel, but as the men hove round there were serious accidents not infrequently, causing fatal injuries. For, if one of the men while heaving up the anchor suddenly failed, or the cable broke, the rest of the men would be thrown as from a revolving wheel and dash their brains against the ship's sides.

For'ard of this would be the fo'c's'le bulk-head, and then in merchant ships would usually be the cook-room, where the food was prepared. It consisted of a bricked hearth, with a large copper boiler, and there was a kind of primitive oven. The furnace burned wood, and it was usually the case that towards the end of an Atlantic voyage the drinking-water and

the firewood had become almost extinct simultaneously ; so the crew would be sent ashore at the first suitable island, some to hew down trees, whilst others sought a fair stream. From this ' cook-roome ' there proceeded not merely heat and smell, which were most trying in the tropics, but also a perpetual risk of fire.

There was no definite place for this galley. In men-of-war it was often situated in the hold, so as to leave the fo'c's'le clear for fighting. That forward portion of the ship was the likeliest place to be the centre of the fiercest contest when in action, and the likeliest part to receive gun-shot. Therefore the flying bricks would act like missiles, and there would (after the battle) be no more cook-room because there would be no more bricks. This being the most offensive, in the sense of war-like, part of the vessel, it was desirable to reserve it clear of a dangerous furnace. But merchantmen required all the hold for stowage, so they had but little choice except to put the cook-room into the fo'c's'le ; and a further reason was that they in a fight would show their stern to the enemy and not their prow. Sir Walter Raleigh used to advise that the cook-room be located for'ard, because of the fire risk, and certainly it was a nuisance to

have it so near to the powder for the chase pieces. On the other hand, if it was placed in the hold, as was customary in the royal ships, the excessive heat ruined the food-stores. Sir Henry Mainwaring stated that, 'If I were to go to sea as a man-of-war, I would have no cook-room at all but such a one as I would contrive to be removed and struck down in hold if I list ; and yet it should waste no more wood than these do, and dress sufficient victuals for the company and roast or bake some competent quantity for the Commander or any persons of quality.' But, as it was, victuals in the hold used to become 'corrupt and putrefied,' and the beer all sour, long before they had got far on their voyages.

Starting from aft once more, we begin to examine the upper-gun deck. First we enter the 'great cabin,' which corresponded to the ward-room in a modern man-of-war. Here the officers ate their meals, but they had to be careful of their heads when rising from the table or there would be collision with the half-deck. Below the master's cabin, already indicated on the quarter-deck, was the captain's cabin, and square holes were cut into each for ventilation and known as scuttles. It was customary at this time for the boatswain

and all the 'common' sailors under his command to live and labour for'ard of the mainmast, whilst the captain, master, master's mate, gunners, quartermasters, trumpeters, etc., were located aft. This was known as dividing the ship's company 'fore and aft,' thus in two parts.

A ladder connected this part of the upper-deck with the half-deck; then would come the upper part of the main capstan. Outside, for'ard of the bulkhead, and just abaft the mainmast, was a knighthead; that is to say, a piece of timber bolted tight to the beams, and usually carved with the representation of a head. In this piece of timber we should find three sheeves for the halyards and one for the top rope by which the topmast was struck or hoisted, this rope being led as required to the capstan. The smaller boats, such as the skiffs and shallops, were hoisted on board and stowed by the great hatch, but the longboat was usually towed astern. To keep her from sheering, a second rope called a guest-rope was used, and, in order to prevent the boat's bows being torn out, the tow-rope was secured to a third rope which went round the boat's gunwale.

This boat was a somewhat heavy affair and

more resembling a model ship, able to carry sail and to stand bad weather. The boat-swain and his mates were those responsible for the longboat. Arms were kept aft in readiness to be served out in case the enemy should adopt the usual tactics of boarding, but the crew were not allowed (for fear of mutiny) to have them by their side normally. The formula used by these early seventeenth-century seamen for their anchors was that the shank should measure thrice the length of one of the flukes; and, as to weight, the sheet anchor of a 500-ton ship was to be of one ton. Of course the lightest anchor was the kedge, which was useful for dropping down a river with the tide and could be lifted from the longboat. The stream anchor was employed in fine weather when remaining a tide in deep water. But the three bower anchors were heavier, and usually it was two of these which were carried at the bows in readiness when approaching port. They could be relied on in reasonable weather and strong tide, but the last refuge in exceptional circumstances was the sheet anchor.

When the ship was about to round-to and bring-up, the master would order two anchors to be hung out, up and down the ship's side,

ready to let go at the word. If the ground was so oozy that the anchor would drag, it was the practice to lash boards to the flukes so as to make the latter broader and more gripping. This was known as 'shoeing the anchor.' The anchor stock was of timber, as indeed it continued through Nelson's days. A great deal of valuable space at the bottom of the hold in these vessels was wasted by ballast, which consisted of stones and gravel, though sometimes of lead. Mats made of plaited rope yarn were applied to the main and fore yards to prevent chafe, and in the same way the anchor flukes were protected to save the fore-sheet pendant from rubbing against the sharp point.

Ahead of the stem was the beak, whither the tacks of the foresail were brought, and the men went about their business in handling the spritsail that hung from the bowsprit. The day had not yet arrived when triangular headsails were employed in such big vessels. The compass was enclosed in a cupboard placed in the steerage, and fastened with wooden nails. At night a candle or lamp enabled the steersman to keep his course, but care was taken that only the faintest light was afforded, lest perchance an enemy

might be about. In light weather extra sail area was obtained by lacing to the mizzen, main and fore sails an additional piece called a bonnet. This was employed when running even in a smart breeze, with the wind dead aft or on the quarter, the depth of this annexe being usually about a third of the sail itself. The lacing was done by means of a latchet, which went through the sail's eyelet holes. Thus, if the wind increased too much, the order was given to 'shake off the bonnet,' which was easily obeyed by pulling out the latchet. In fine fair weather when running, for instance, before the 'trades' to the West Indies, they would boom out the clew of the foresail and mainsail with a light pole. Bow-lines, to enable the ship to sail as near as possible to the wind, and brails to haul up the bunt of the sail when furling, were very much in use. Before going into action, when every man was wanted for fighting and repelling boarders; when, too, there was a risk of sails catching fire, all canvas was stowed except the foresail, maintopsail, and the mizzen.

We referred just now to the formula in regard to a ship's length and beam. In order to obtain a suitable length for the mainmast,

you measured four-fifths of the vessel's beam, and then multiplied that fraction by three. For its circumference you might allow one inch to every yard of the mast's length. The foremast was to be four-fifths the length of the main, and the mizzen-mast half the main-mast's height.

The absence of sufficient dry docks compelled the resort to careening when a ship's bottom had to be repaired or caulked. Before commencing this operation all heavy items such as guns, ballast, and stores were first removed. She was then hauled down by a lower ship using strong tackles, and sometimes the careened ship required weight on the upper deck to make her heel over. If the harbour was such that it did not dry out, the carpenters could then go alongside and work from a raft the whole length of one side, and then continue the labour the other side after she had been careened the opposite way. Seventeenth-century painters and engravers have left us interesting records of these proceedings.

To prevent a ship from becoming nail-sick through the salt-water rust, all the bolt-heads below the waterline were covered with lead. But at the best of times these roughly built craft always seemed to leak badly. Pumps

consequently formed important parts of the outfit. Principal reliance was placed on the chain pumps, which delivered most water as reckoned by the half-hour glass, and were soonest mended; but the most usual was the ordinary shore pump, and this was placed by the mainmast. Old pictures illustrate ropes rove into a ship's rudder near the head and then led through the sternpost, where both ends were spliced together. The idea was that the rudder, which occasionally carried away from its gudgeon-pins, would be saved by the ropes.

The ship's guns of this time were not made always with the bore sufficiently smooth; therefore accuracy of fire would have been impossible but for the fact that the range was so very short. The ordnance was mounted on carriages that were of a kind superior to the prevailing land type. Sometimes the shot was wrapped round with old rags or rope-yarn, to enable the end which went out first having a smooth passage and not getting caught on any flaws of the bore. The gun was thrust out through its port by means of tackles when the command was given to the gunners, 'Bowse Ho!' At sea in rough weather, in order to keep the gun carriages from getting

adrift, the breech of the gun was lashed down by big ropes, but these lashings were never used in a fight.

When the attacking ship came within boarding distance, case-shot—consisting of stones, bullets, and broken bits of iron—were fired from the big guns at the enemy's men on the upper deck who were using their 'murderers' with annoying effect. 'Murderers' were light ordnance of iron or brass, and in merchant ships were placed at the break of the fo'c's'le and the half-deck. By means of a pintle and socket they could be traversed as required, and were able to pick off the enemy's men on the deck with such success that the name was well chosen. 'Murderers' were especially useful for clearing the enemy's decks before your own men leapt aboard your opponent's ship. Sometimes these guns were murderers to the wrong people; for when made of iron, and corroded by the sea, they would burst and kill the gunners themselves.

Round shot with a bar of iron penetrating the middle was found efficacious when fired at the ropes, rigging, spars, and men; all of these being cut and maimed. Powder was taken from a small barrel into the gun by means of a ladle; but the practice was now

being preferred of loading the guns with cartridges, as the older method was not safe. Not surprisingly, the gun in action would occasionally dismount itself from its carriage and cause disaster to its crew. The powder used at sea was made up of saltpetre, brimstone, and charcoal, and the ports in the ship's side were made wide enough to allow the guns to traverse forward as well as aft, thirty inches being the width allowed for a demi-culverin. The touch-holes were primed with a fine dry powder which the gunner had ready in a horn at his girdle, this powder being for the purpose of firing the cartridge, which was pierced by a priming-iron. By means of a rammer the powder and shot were pushed well home. Round shot was employed for the longest range and could be relied on for piercing any ship's hull. Sheep-skin at the end of a staff was the article by which the gun was sponged out before inserting the powder, and also in action to keep the gun from heating. Tompkins were already customary for fitting the mouth of a gun, and keeping out the sea from entering the breech.

But additional to ordnance were employed fire-balls, which were thrown at the enemy's vessel to set on fire hull, sails, masts, and rigging. Waist-cloths were hung about the ship's

waist for the purpose of concealing the men, and such cloths were always known as ' fights ' : when a bulkhead was covered where ' murderers ' were being used in concealment, the cloths were known as ' close-fights.' We thus have the beginnings of the modern protective deck and barbette. The men whose duty it was to hurl down the fire-balls and fire-pots were placed in the tops, where they were hidden by cloths called top-armour.

The lack of reliable up-to-date charts of the Thames estuary, and the paucity of pilots, became more serious as the seafaring profession increased and the Stuart ships grew in tonnage. Everyone accustomed to use these waters to-day is only too thankful that the treacherous sands are well marked by buoys and lightships, which are shifted in accordance with continuous surveys. But in the early seventeenth century it was a veritable nightmare to take the cumbrous, unhandy vessels through this maze, even when the tides were worked to the fullest extent. Ships were often stranded and lost or damaged, so that as late as 1678 the Admiralty were still perplexed. In January of that year they had under consideration ' the importance of having a more settled nursery of pilots for the River and Channel than what



In the possession of Messrs. T. H. Parker, 28 Berkeley Square, W.

SOLE-BAY, 1672



now is,' and it was proposed by the King himself 'that some method might be digested, with the advice of the Officers of the Navy and Governors of that [Christ's] Hospital together with the Brethren of the Trinity House, for the settling a breed of pilots out of the King's mathematical boys, to be constantly borne upon his yachts, and there kept to that particular practice of observing the depths of water in all the places the yachts are employed in and passed through, with the shifting of the sands, and what else appertains to the perfecting of a good pilot.' The further suggestion was made of imposing compulsory pilotage on foreigners coming up the Thames, and to charge them pilotage dues whether they picked up a pilot or not; for at that date there was 'nothing more deficient in the navy of England than a competent provision for maintaining a standing stock of pilots.' So said the Admiralty.

The importance of the Thames estuary could scarcely be exaggerated, not merely because so many of the principal voyages and expeditions of merchantmen began from Blackwall to the East Indies, West Indies, Virginia, and elsewhere, but on account of the part which the Medway played in naval matters. Chatham was regarded as so much safer than Portsmouth that

in the former a ship would ride to only a light three-strand hawser, whereas a good strong cable was required at the latter. But there were other features which made Chatham of such consequence; such as the docks and dockyard where the principal officers like the master shipwrights dwelt with their families. London was the storehouse of England, and Chatham's proximity by land and river made it easy to get stores. The 16 ft. rise and fall of tide (at springs) made the place convenient for cleaning ships' bottoms, even in the case of the biggest craft. No wind or weather could ever hurt a vessel here right up the Medway, and there was room for all.

In the days of Elizabeth and James I Portsmouth had practically ceased to be a great naval base, not merely because of its distance by water from London, but owing to its strong tide, its limited space, its exposure to winds from N.E. to S.S.E., and to the fact that the *teredo navalis* worm had given it a bad name. Up the Thames in these Stuart days there were dockyards at Woolwich, Blackwall, Deptford, Limehouse, and Ratcliffe; and it was the proud boast that all England could not furnish such fine sailormen as those engaged in the little colliers which used to trade every three weeks

between London and Newcastle. For generations such crews, even as late as Queen Victoria's time, were veritable artists in ship-handling; but we must not forget that in Devonshire, too, there was a wonderful breed of seafarers who would have made a similar claim to priority. Ask a Lowestoft and a Brixham ketch skipper to-day which he thinks the finest fisherman and you will get the fairest answer, subject to natural pride. The other day I asked the former what he thought of the latter. 'Well, sir, Brixham men are pretty tidy chaps,' conceded a ruddy-faced Viking-like sexagenarian in a North Sea jumper; but he added, '—next to ours.' 'L'stoft fellows?' answered the Devonshire critic with due judgment. 'Not so bad, I reckon—if they only had *our* ships.'

Plymouth in those seventeenth-century times seemed to Londoners an unconscionable distance away, as indeed it was by road no less than by the wearisome English Channel; and thus it developed its own hardy sailormen, its own fishing and trading, together with a certain jealousy of London, where it was always easier to get merchants to form a stock company for sending out two or three ships on a trading expedition. All the corn, beer,

butter, and cheese from the Continent came not to Portsmouth or Plymouth, but to London. Similarly London was more centrally placed for receiving supplies of beef, pork, and bacon. The supplies of masts, yards, pitch, tar, cordage, and cables were brought from the Baltic, so here again London was more conveniently situated than the other ports.

On the other hand, Chatham had its disadvantages by the silting up of the Medway, and a north-east wind meant that the fleet was bottled up, yet the Dutch would have a fair breeze all the way if they came to invade. Much could be done, and was achieved, by working the tides, but this was slow progress. The Stuart mariners used to wait for a wind between south and west to carry them down from Chatham and round the North Foreland. They would then (if bound down the English Channel) bring up in the Downs and wait for a wind that was either northerly or easterly, which in three tides brought them to Portsmouth. The great advantage of Plymouth was the ease in getting out of the Sound into the open sea, and its strategical position with regard to Spain: its chief disadvantage was its exposure to southerly gales, though fleets could anchor in the shelter of Cawsand Bay as

long as the wind was south-west. Unless the ships had come forth out of the Hamoaze, there were delays sometimes amounting to weeks before the arrival of a fair wind enabled them to reach the Sound itself. The strong tides, the rocks, and the winding channel are awkward enough for a battleship going in and out to-day; but kedging and warping in the old sailing-ship days, or a fair wind, were the only alternatives under much more difficult and unbuoyed conditions.

The ships of the Newcastle-London trade just mentioned numbered in Monson's time about two hundred. They were of 200 to 300 tons burthen, built of great strength and spaciousness. This fine school for seamanship suffered financially; for the fleet came south with coal, but had to return from London with holds empty. Sailing down the English Channel, when once clear of the Goodwins, is child's play compared with North Sea work. From the Lincolnshire coast, all the way up the London river, is as trying a bit of navigation as anyone could demand, especially when accompanied by head-winds. Short quick tacks, continual sounding with the lead, perpetual vigilance, short nasty seas—it is this condition at the best of times. The result was that, until

the fishermen became a more numerous class later in this seventeenth century, the Newcastle men were the finest of all the English seamen engaged in coastal work, and every three weeks they could normally be found up the Thames, ready to be used if the Navy required additional crews for war.

As we picture to our minds the life at sea in man-of-war, merchantman, or fisherman, we shall not fail to remember that there was a good deal of wily ingenuity mingled with the rugged and illiterate character of the crews who manned these ships. I have heard eminent lawyers say that to-day in the witness-box the simple farm-hand, or the untutored deck-hand, is capable of giving the clearest and truest evidence of any: not all the most subtle cross-examination can break through such honest testimony. In the same way we can think of Elizabethan and Jacobean seafarers, with their clear-cut ideas, derived not from books, but direct from personal experience, doing quite brilliant acts at sea. In the arts of deception not even a woman could beat them; nor were they devoid of humour.

What could be better, for instance, than the following? It was a time-honoured stratagem that when an English ship had captured at sea

a Spanish caravel and the enemy's men had been taken prisoners, the English captain would divest them of their garments. Into these Spanish clothes would step the English sailors, who would then sail unsuspected and unmolested in the caravel to a Spanish port of which intelligence was greatly wanted. Thus, before the Spaniards had time to discover the trick, this caravel prize would put to sea with fullest information as to the number and size of the enemy's ships, his guns, fortifications, and other details. The employment of false flags became so frequent that they even failed to deceive: but an undisguised Spanish ship, with Spanish-costumed men visible on deck, could fool the most cautious.

But let us see more of the adventurous life on the high seas about this period.

CHAPTER III

ADVENTURES ON THE HIGH SEAS

THE difference between modern going to sea and seventeenth-century voyaging is that between certainty and suspense. If there were not war, there were pirates; but hostilities during the sixteenth century had always seemed so imminent that the mariner's mind was always working on the lines of self-defence, rather than satisfaction with apparent peacefulness. How could he elude a ship or squadron that might seek to waylay him? What new form of bluff could be sprung? How could an ambush, so carefully laid off the harbour approaches, be made of no account?

All sorts of tricks were devised and tried out, such as that of detaching a single ship and sending her ahead, but to leeward, and so drawing the enemy to leeward also before the main fleet was in sight. The single ship had been selected because she was the fastest unit and able to close-haul nearest to the wind. Thus, after a long chase, the main fleet would

come along and escape because the enemy would be miles away on the lee side, whilst the smart single ship would gradually work her way back to her sisters. Pinnaces (or light cruisers as we should call them nowadays) were thus used as decoys. If, however, it was not unlikely that the pinnace might be captured, the senior officer of the enemy fleet would purposely be supplied by her with fake intelligence implying that the fleet was coming home along a certain latitude. The enemy, having perused this document, would make sail along that latitude, whilst the bluffing fleet would proceed on a line perhaps a whole degree further north or south.

Another trick was the employment of lights during the dark hours to save a fleet from a superior enemy. As everyone is well aware, lanterns were carried at the stern of an Admiral's ship, so that the other ships in that fleet might know her position. Suppose that at sundown the enemy was rapidly overhauling the fleet, and likely to come up by midnight. In this case it was no bad plan to douse all lights, come on a wind and steer at right-angles to the original course after dark, but leave behind a pinnace still running before the wind with lights so high as to equal that of the

flagship's poop. Thus by morning the main fleet would have escaped into safety even if a pinnace were lost.

It was Sir William Monson who possessed such a full knowledge of all these interesting sea-tricks, and he gives a further instance of the way in which men-of-war loved to deceive the enemy by pretending to be merchantmen. An Admiral at sea commanding a fleet of superior strength might see to windward an inferior fleet belonging, let us say, to Spain. Anxious to engage the latter, the English Admiral was handicapped because he knew that his own ships were too far to leeward ever to reach the Spaniards. He therefore relied on the tactical trick of separating the English fleet into two squadrons, of which one was the smaller; and hoisted out Spanish colours in the larger squadron. The weaker squadron would then be sent on ahead some short distance and be told to manœuvre as if it were a body of merchant ships. This being done, the English Admiral would begin firing his guns so as to give the impression that he was chasing and attacking a fleeing enemy of traders; but he was careful to aim the guns so that no shots hit. The Spanish fleet to windward would be attracted by the firing, and come

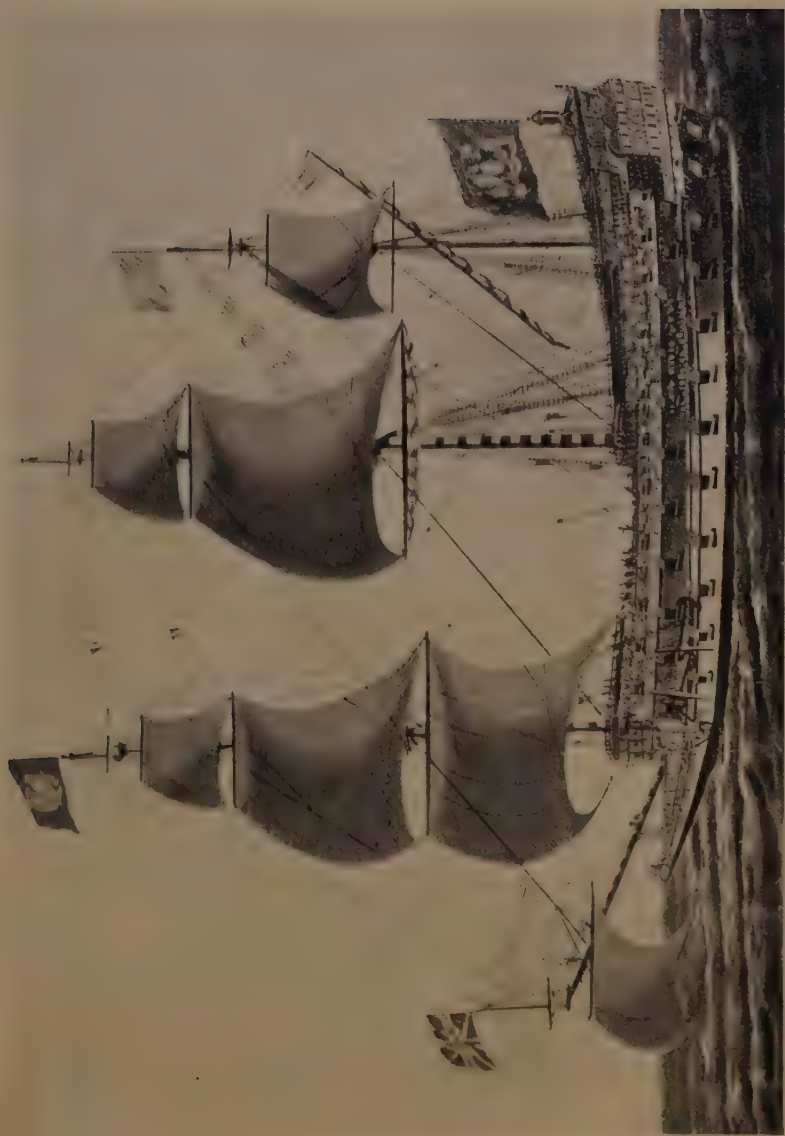
sailing down, in order to gain a share in this easy way of obtaining the booty : but, at the right moment, the English fleet would fall upon them and annihilate them.

There were rules for the behaviour of vessels even before the time of Elizabeth, no captain, for example, being allowed to 'take the wind of his Admiral, but come under his lee.' When the Admiral ordered his squadron to get under way, a gun was fired from the flagship to inform the other units, and we would give much just for the chance of seeing one ship after another break out anchor, and cant off with her parchment-coloured sails showing up so well against a background of green water and blue sky. The pinnaces of fifty tons and under (as built in the time of Charles I), three-masted, square-rigged, two-decked, were really little models of the bigger ships, yet too heavily sparred and over-ordnanced to be satisfactory. Still, they helped to make up a wonderful picture of marine energy. By the year 1618, both in design and rig, Stuart ships had begun to improve, though originality of thought and experimental progress were not characteristics of that epoch. Stereotyped formulæ, rule-of-thumb methods, continued to keep improvements in check. If a vessel

were constructed on the basis of three beams to the length, with a draught not exceeding sixteen feet, she was considered of the best type; but the tendency certainly was now to get rid of the double galleries and lofty upperworks which detracted from a vessel's seaworthiness.

There was a stage when the excessive tumble-home of Stuart ships, and therefore extreme narrowness of beam, had to be stopped, as it was another element against seaworthy virtue. The French and Dutch were building their three-deckers, or principal capital ships, with a 44-ft. beam, whereas the custom in English shipyards was not to exceed 41 ft., and sometimes not even to attain that figure. But, as we know from Sir Anthony Deane, an alteration of policy came in 1673, when 'His Majesty has directed those nine three-deck ships of the 2nd Rate built and abuilding to be near 45 foot broad, which is another improvement we had not till the year '73, the builders of England before that time having not well considered it that breadth only will make a stiff ship.'

Very attractive to the eye they looked at sea, with the sun shining on their imposing hulls elaborate with carvings and gilt wreaths,



THE 'SOVEREIGN OF THE SEAS,' 1637



angels, and cupids, a fine figurehead, and a general suggestion that ships were creatures worthy of pride. It was Commonwealth puritanism which halted this ornate embellishment, that had been allowed to go perhaps beyond the bounds of reasonableness. But, at the same time, we must remember that there was a steady moral downgrade which went on through this century and did not end ashore. Not even naval officers escaped this blight, nor dockyard officials highly placed. Pursers, for instance, were accused of dishonesty, got into debt and absented themselves without leave; and there were cases, too, where volunteers and midshipmen were carried above a ship's complement and of no use to the service whatever. The Admiralty referred to them as 'too old and too long practised in the liberties and pleasures of the shore ever to apply themselves as they ought to do, to the duty, obedience, and trade of a seaman, as also . . . wholly incapable of doing the work . . . and all this to the insupportable inconveniency daily complained of by the commanders of the ships on which such midshipmen extraordinary and volunteers are imposed.' Such were the conditions in the time of Mr. Pepys.

Not infrequently these Stuart ships were sent to sea with crews of poor physique, diseased, unused to the sea, and with scarcely a rag to their backs. In the merchantmen or pirate ships the food was especially notorious, and it was no exception for the fare to consist of putrid pork, salt beef long since gone blue and white with mould, and stinking fish. But, as this was a transition age in regard to shipbuilding, so it was that intermediate period between mediæval and modern ideas in naval matters. The Cinque Ports, robbed of their old independence, became a mere part of the whole system which was being evolved to form gradually a regular standing navy instead of an opportunist fleet. To break down tradition in seafaring matters is not easy, for the shipman is before all things conservative to the limit of obstinacy. But, none the less, in ship design and construction, in the handling of fleets at sea, there was a greater boldness of method than had been possible in Elizabeth's reign. Piracy, however indefensible, was not merely an outlet for those adventurous spirits unable to be contained on land, but helped to keep up the demand for crews. During that period of anti-climax which ushered in the seventeenth century, following so suddenly

after the Elizabethan excitements, the patriotic English pirates took no heed of the 1603 proclamation withdrawing letters of marque. Perhaps to some consciences it seemed preposterous and absurd that the self-same kind of incidents which had won fame for Sir Francis Drake in one reign should when performed by Sir Henry Mainwaring in the next monarch's period become illegal. Sailors are not subtle lawyers, and they were much more nervous of starvation under lawful conditions ashore than of being punished for roving with profit afloat.

Mainwaring's career is stressed because he is so expressive of this curious transitional time, which seemed to put a too sudden brake on maritime energy. As a consummate seaman and naval warrior, as well as a terror to the Spaniard, he was the true successor of Drake, but on a more intellectual plane. The greatest misfortune which fate ever handed him was the date of his birth. He came into the world in the year before the Armada sailed up the English Channel, and after taking his B.A. at Oxford he was admitted a student of the Inner Temple. But the true and adventurous side of the man began when he was twenty-four and was sent with a commission

from the Lord Admiral to wipe out the pirates who infested the Bristol Channel, as they had intermittently continued to do for generations.

Mainwaring was one of that neo-Elizabethan band, which included such men as Captain John Smith, who adventured in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America ; and Sir Francis Verney, who sold his property and became, like so many other Englishmen of different social status, a renegade working with the Algerine pirates of the Mediterranean. The worst kind of corruption is that of the best men ; and he falls flattest whose altitude has been most pronounced. So, unfortunately, some of the best English sailormen, for the sake of magnificence and self-indulgent luxury, threw every principle aside and ostracised themselves from their country to teach the Mohammedan corsairs how to sail square-rigged ships, and in these craft went harrying and murdering along the Mediterranean. John Smith and Henry Mainwaring, themselves not innocent of piracy, had however a firm contempt for those ' renegadoes ' who gave up the Christian religion. And, without seeking in the slightest to whitewash Mainwaring, one may agree that he fell into the piratical life ' not purposely,'

to quote his excuse to the King, 'but by mischance.'

Thus in 1612 he purchased for about £700 the ship *Resistance*, built by the same Phineas Pett who constructed the *Kingfisher*, and so many other vessels for the Navy. With a splendid crew this well-armed *Resistance* put to sea, nominally to pillage the Spaniards beyond 'the line,' but actually he chose to hang about the Straits of Gibraltar by Cape Spartel, a strategically excellent position for intercepting Spanish merchantmen. Nothing sails so fleetly as success, and from being the owner of one ship he became by swift fortune commander of a whole fleet. His name was passed from one Spanish sailor to another, from merchant to the Government itself, as a scourge of the sea. To Mainwaring and others of his kind this piracy was called a 'trade.' So far as a pirate could act honourably Mainwaring behaved himself. He obtained the release of Christian prisoners in North Africa, he refused to allow anyone to molest English ships, restored plunder taken by error that belonged to an English merchant, and declined to throw in his lot with the Barbarian chiefs in spite of every temptation.

His operations extended up the Atlantic to the Irish coast, and even to Newfoundland, where he took from the international fishing fleets ships as well as men, victuals as well as munitions. And when, on his return to European waters, he was attacked by five of the Spanish Navy sent out to destroy him, he with only three ships chased them into flight. It was typical of Mainwaring that later on he was offered but declined a pardon and a handsome yearly salary to serve as an admiral under the Spanish flag. But finally, when in 1616 he was offered by his own King James I a pardon, or the alternative of being made to surrender to an English naval force, Mainwaring, after some delay, accepted the former. It was next that he showed his change of life in assisting his own country by capturing a Moorish pirate ship which had the temerity to sail even to the Thames estuary. From now onwards, restored to royal grace, the ex-pirate advanced from favour to promotion. Two years later he wrote and offered to the King, 'being newly recreated and restored by your gracious Pardon to that life which was forfeited to the Law,' but now 'Your Majesty's new Creature,' a most valuable treatise on the beginnings, practices, and suppression of pirates; and

then in 1618 this scholar-sailor and gentleman-pirate received a knighthood as well as being given an appointment at Court. And all this before he had attained his thirty-second birthday. Ere he passed away at sixty-six he served (among other capacities) as member of the Committee of the Virginia Company, Member of Parliament for Dover, a Brother of Trinity House and subsequently Master, Rear-Admiral and Vice-Admiral in the English Navy.

Mainwaring was nothing if not a real sailor, who ruled his own pirate force with stern discipline. On the west, or Atlantic, coast of Morocco, just above Rabat, lies the port of Mehedia at the mouth of the River Sebu. At Mehedia, or Mamora as it used to be known, Mainwaring had his base. The choice of this at once shows that Mainwaring was a naval strategist; for it was distant less than 150 miles to the Gibraltar Straits and on the flank of the route taken by ships making for the West Indies via the North-East Trades route. Sometimes there were as many as thirty pirate ships in this port at one day, and it was most convenient for bringing in prizes; for if the latter were captured off the approaches to Cadiz the northerly wind would enable such booty to be sailed to the pirate base in about

twenty-four hours. If, however, the Spanish ships bound across to the Caribbean wished to sight the Canaries (as was their custom), then Mainwaring could cut across the Cadiz-Canary track and still have a fair wind out and home by bracing his yards and sailing close-hauled. This north-west shoulder of Africa was quite a favourite locality for rovers.

Only some eight or nine years previously Captain John Smith had gone aboard a French ship at the port of Saffee to try 'conclusions at sea,' that is to say piracy. He was invited on board an English rover which happened to be in the roads, and put to sea during the night because a gale sprang up. They soon captured a ship coming along from Teneriffe with a cargo of wine; and, after a fight with five Spanish men-of-war, eventually went back to Saffee. Mainwaring was able to boast that 'most of the best ships that trade for the Straits, and the coast of Spain and Barbary, as also divers others have come through my fingers.' Another strategical area for pirates was that between Ushant and Brest, where the restricted channel and the necessity of taking the tide when it was fair made it quite a suitable locality. So the career of an English pirate could often be summed up as follows :

Having obtained by purchase a convenient, moderate-sized ship and got together a crew of men 'generally necessitous and discontented,' the captain would go off to the Ushant-Brest patrol and take his pick of Frenchmen or Dutchmen from north Holland. These were vessels of 180 or 200 tons and lightly manned, being therefore easily captured. The procedure now went on snowball fashion, for with this bigger craft they were able to overpower anything smaller. Every additional prize meant an increasing fleet, which ere long was mighty enough to capture the biggest vessel that might come over the horizon. And thus, in short, even a small but well-crewed craft from some lonely, unwatched English bay could within a few months win for her people some great carrack rich in cargo and armament. No wonder that it was difficult to suppress such lawlessness on the high seas.

As already hinted from the duties of Monson, western Ireland was a very popular area for such adventurers. Mainwaring went so far as to designate Ireland 'the nursery and storehouse of pirates,' since they were always well received here and on the best of terms with the inhabitants. The latter would supply them with victuals in exchange for valuable presents,

the girls were in love with the crews, it was always a pleasure to see a new ship in that out-of-the-way district, and entertainments were arranged for the rovers ashore. Such bays as Broadhaven in the north-west, and Berehaven in the south-west, became therefore popular bases for refreshment and recreation, and the Irish had not the slightest hesitation in trading with the visitors.

Those of us who spent several years, winter and summer, patrolling off western Ireland during the Great War, have vivid recollections of the numerous natural harbours to be found along the coast. The wildness of the scenery, and the sense of remoteness from the eastern world, made these parts in the seventeenth century not less ideal for piracy than they were during the Great War for the operations of U-boats. Monson in 1609 bewailed the fact that there were eleven pirate ships with 1,000 men off that west coast which he could not deal with. The method of trading was carried on in the following manner. The pirate ship having arrived in his favourite rocky haven, first set to work obtaining meat and other supplies of food. It was done not openly, but by stealth. The captain would go ashore in the ship's boat, inform the principal man of the

village that so many oxen were required tomorrow. No objection was urged, except that the captain must send a party of his crew ashore armed, and carry off the oxen as if by force. There would be no opposition, but under cover of night the boat would come ashore again, and at an agreed spot there must be deposited either money or goods two or three times the oxen's value.

In this manner the pirates lived a charmed life, enjoying the freedom of the seas and reaping its harvest. If ever they were caught, they had taken what they wanted from life and had no right to complain. These nautical crooks were, however, not confined to waters where the Atlantic comes sweeping in: the Thames estuary and the Medway were useful regions for those anxious to enter the business, but lacking sufficient capital for an initial ship. For example, lots of little vessels from Holland and elsewhere would bring up below Gravesend, or further still down the river in Tilbury Hope, or just inside the West Swale abreast of Queenborough. The required conditions were a westerly wind, an ebb tide, and a dark night. It was then easy enough for the pirate aspirants to wait till the crews had come ashore, and then, putting off in a couple of

wherries to the deserted craft, the thieves dropped down to sea with all the circumstances in their favour. By the hour when the genuine owners had left the tavern, the vessel was well on her way to the North Foreland.

More frequently than not pirates of this period escaped capital punishment. Partly this was accounted for by their elusiveness, but also for the reason that such brave men were too valuable a naval reserve and too few in numbers to be hoisted at the gallows. Such, at least, was the Jacobean policy. Abroad the English pirate was admired for his skill, who would be sure to fight till death rather than forfeit his freedom. When the time, however, came that a pirate wished to retire from the trade and settle down quietly at home in England with his family, yet not suffer the suspense of subsequent arrest, there were two methods of forsaking what Mainwaring was pleased to call 'an honourable crime.' Firstly, if he were a pirate in a small business, that is to say owning a little ship that had not yet become so notorious that she was 'wanted' by the authorities, then the simplest plan was to arrange a nice little bribe with an official so as to purchase his silence; and then to choose some part of the coast distant from their

homes, or where they purchased the little ship originally. At a suitable opportunity the ship would be run ashore or sunk, the pirates would land in their boats and ultimately reach their cottages. No evidence against them was forthcoming, and they lived to enjoy their ill-gotten wealth in peace.

The second method was more fitted for ambitious pirates with bigger ideas. Having had a good run of luck, such a person argued that if he waited only a little longer there would be another war with Spain, and the King would look on him not as a pirate, but as a hero of the sea. Should these hostilities seem too long tarrying, then the pirate must count his money and reckon if he could afford an odd £1,000 or more. Yes? Very well; one thing else was necessary, and that was to perform a spectacular, noble deed of restoring to its owners some captured English merchantman. By the good offices of friends, and the parting of four-figure money, a pardon was practically assured. But if by any chance that should miscarry, there was still no need for anxiety, since the warm waters of the Riviera would welcome them if the ships would use Nice and Villefranche as their bases for future piratical operations, and there were even warehouses to store the booty.

Under these circumstances there was no difficulty in getting volunteers for crews, provided they had faith in the captain. His reputation would soon get about, and if he were especially successful, such as Henry Mainwaring, Peter Easton, Peter Peeters, and some others, he could pick and choose where he liked. Contrasted with this is the fact that the Navy could not always get enough men together for ships on their lawful occasions: there would ensue delayed departures as the ships swung round their anchors in the Downs, till hands could be pressed from incoming merchantmen.

Even in the most law-abiding citizen of this terribly civilised twentieth century lurks a secret regard for, if not a definite envy of, the roaming pirate able to combine with his money-making the joy of cruising over the seas. There was grand excitement for a youngish man of good health and sound courage, whereas our moderns have to find their thrills in such artificial sports as ball-games, played out not according to chance, but to a set of rules. Each day would bring its own possibilities and opportunities, and there was always the hope of making a fine prize. So the ship routine worked out on the following lines: After

cruising along during the night hours, and being in the requisite patrol area, the watch would be ordered just before dawn to furl every sail, and lie 'at-hull' till a good look round had been made, so as to ascertain what vessels were about. 'Hulling' meant to let the ship drift as she liked, with every bit of sail stowed. In the pirates' case the object was to make the vessel as much as possible inconspicuous. But this practice was usual also in flat, calm weather, so as to avoid the intolerable chafe, the banging of yards and sails against masts and rigging, and also in heavy weather.

During such heavy gales that all canvas had to be taken in, the helm was lashed down to leeward and she should then lie-to quite comfortably and make good in the direction of about one point forward of the beam. Thus, if it were an easterly gale she could heave-to on the port tack, heading eight points off the wind, that is to the southward, with the helm secured to starboard, and in this manner she would make good along the line W. by S. It was always a matter of dispute among mariners of this time as to whether in such cases of bad weather it were advisable to have the topmasts up or to have them down. It was argued that

whilst the weight aloft made a ship heel to leeward more readily, yet it prevented her from the undesirability of making a quick roll to windward, hitting the seas that side, and so being swamped at the waist. If the gale was not too fierce, she would ride head to sea with only a 'hullock' of a sail, as many readers of *Hakluyt* will doubtless remember.

A 'hullock' was just a small portion of the mizzen, brailed up and leaving only so much as to keep the ship head-on. Sometimes, too, swinging ship could be done by setting merely a 'hullock' of the foresail to cant her head round. To 'lie under the sea' was the recognised expression to mean that, when in a storm, the ship was lying a-hull, with the helm to leeward, and the sea breaking on the bow and broadside. Among the seafaring superstitions of the seventeenth century was that concerned with loading for a voyage. If, by chance, the ship at that time took a list over to starboard whilst taking in cargo or stores, this was considered a bad sign : she was to have a long and unsuccessful voyage. Incidentally one may here counteract the oft-stated remark that the word 'port,' as applied to the left-hand side of a vessel viewed from aft, is quite a modern usage. As a fact, the word was employed by

English seamen certainly in 1620, for Mainwaring uses the expression: 'She heels to starboard or to port.' He also says: 'But if she heel to larboard . . . ' It was the custom to take in cargo on the larboard side, and thus quite logically this was known, alternatively, as the *port* or harbour side in Mainwaring's time.

But to continue the pirate's daily routine; if the morning light reveals some ship, it will be the pirate's effort to hoist sail and then carry on that vessel's definite course, to resemble just another merchantman till the hour should be ripe for attack. If the pirates were cruising as a fleet, this force was before daybreak separated into units each three miles apart. Should the dawn bring no victims, the pirate fleet would individually begin beating to windward as if they had no mutual connection. No two ships would be quite on the same course, and there would be an appearance very different from the unified formation of vessels running before the wind heading straight to leeward.

These Jacobean mariners knew every trick of the sea. Handed down from father to son, learned by hard emergency, and regularly accumulated till they would almost fill a small book, these devices and cunning ways were

wonderfully ingenious. It was a well-established artifice to entrap a vessel by pretending to run away, yet slowing up all the time. This, in principle, was resorted to by 'Q'-ships during the Great War, who, as apparently innocent tramp steamers, feigned fear and belched out smoke from the funnel as if stoking up to run from the pursuing submarine. Actually the engines were eased down to allow the enemy to come up and be suddenly engaged. So, too, in the seventeenth century a pirate posing as a trader, and being chased by an unsuspecting, slower ship, would cloud on every possible bit of sail, at the same time letting go astern ropes secured to casks or heavy bits of timber: in fact, any kind of drag. It is an interesting experiment when running before a hard breeze to let go astern twenty or forty fathoms of bare rope and to notice how effectually this will almost stop a small but fast craft. During the war I remember, too, in the early days of hostilities, when a landing was expected on the East Coast and a battleship was always kept at anchor in the exposed centre of the Humber, it used to be no easy matter at first to keep alongside her such small boats as steam pinnaces from damage, with a 6-knot tide against a fresh wind:

but drogues of timber were paid out well astern, and the boats would then ride head to tide comparatively well.

The old sailing-ship experts, such as Mainwaring, Monson, and Drake—each a giant in his profession—were all acquainted with this method, just as the modern lifeboat coming home before a following sea over a dangerous bar will throw out astern a conical-shaped drogue of canvas to check her way and avoid being pooped. ‘Hang out drags,’ was Mainwaring’s expression. ‘She must cast drags, hogsheads, and other things overboard, to hinder way,’ was Monson’s advice. And in 1579 Drake from the *Golden Hind* reduced speed by towing astern empty wine-jars. ‘She must shew no more men than an ordinary gang, and haul in her ordnance and shut her ports,’ added Monson, ‘that her force be not discerned till the other ship come within command of her.’ Again the very tactics of the modern ‘Q’-ships, who concealed their guns and most of her crew till the submarine arrived within gun-range.

The sea is so old an institution, ships and men are so little altered, in spite of generations and science, that we get identical results in different ages.

From the look-out men, stationed in the tops,
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a pirate was able to keep himself well informed of ship movements and to make signals to his consorts. Attack was carried out preferably not so much by gunnery, as by the classical example of going alongside and pouring aboard such an avalanche of men as would overpower the poor merchant with his scant crew. The ships of Flanders, because of its shallow, sandy harbours and the shoals off the entrances, were built of light draught, and therefore of greater beam than English ocean-going vessels corresponding in size. The result was that a Fleming was a very roomy home, able to carry a large crew ; and for this reason the pirates of England preferred this type of ship to their own. An additional advantage was that she could fly non-English colours without provoking suspicion.

It was possible to carry the art of counterfeiting too far ; the whole effort of acting must be kept under control, and properly directed, or it defeated its own object. During the war one night I recollect meeting with an ostensibly innocent steam tramp. I hailed her for name and nationality. A voice replied giving both as Norwegian. That voice, however, betrayed the tones of one who was English and a gentleman. The inference was therefore made (and

shortly afterwards confirmed) that this outfit was a British 'Q'-ship commanded by a naval officer. Monson relates the incident how that one night when he was on the high seas his ship chanced to meet another. Who was the stranger? Was she English friend or Spanish foe? 'One of my company hailed her in Spanish without my privity, whereat I was angry and caused her to be called to in English even as she was giving fire to her broadside. It is folly in this case to counterfeit; for no good can come of it seeing the one cannot part from the other without knowing what they are.'

The senior officer in Stuart flagships signalled his fleet by striking or hoisting topsails, showing the flag, or firing guns: this was for day conversation. At night a message could be made only by a system of lights, and of course the admiral's stern lantern was a guide for keeping station. This was not always without its danger when followed blindly. In 1597 the Spanish fleet was proceeding from Lisbon bound for Corunna, and keeping station (as they thought) on their admiral's lantern. However, when it was already too late, the discovery was made that this was not a light afloat, but one ashore. Thirty-six vessels, thus misled, piled

themselves up on the beach, and five thousand men lost their lives.

Right from the time of the ancient Greeks the use of sea-marks and light-towers had aided the sailor. About 800 B.C. the entrance to the Ægean was marked by a tower, and about 500 years later another was erected near Alexandria. In the latter case wooden fires were kept burning night and day, and thus we have the primitive lighthouse. In English waters the Pharos at Dover was the beacon which Roman craft, and subsequently Cinque Port vessels, were thankful to see. But beacons of wood or coal were warning lights off various headlands at different dates, though not on any systematic and controlled principle. Flamborough (or Flame-borough) Head was an important beacon to give some little help to the Newcastle colliers and other coasters. Before the end of the seventeenth century other parts of the North Sea coast—such as Lowestoft, Orfordness, Harwich—were, because of the obvious necessity, lit; just as along the English Channel the North and South Forelands, Portland and the Lizard, were similarly supplied. Curiously, there were no lightships till the Nore was established in 1732, but the use of beacons was so extensive that it was

in effect a kind of telegraphic method of sending intelligence along the coast, by a successive chain, that the enemy was approaching. Already by Mainwaring's day narrow, winding channels were marked by poles with bushes or baskets set thereon as top marks; 'and these,' he relates, 'are also in some places called booms, but in some others they are called beacons.'

Reference has been made on another page to the unpleasantness which a southerly wind caused to shipping in Plymouth Sound. Nowadays the breakwater has made conditions superior to those in Stuart times, though a gale from the southward is not to be relished even yet. What increased the anxieties of the skippers three hundred years ago was that, whilst anchored well clear of harbour influence (such as taverns and women), with no further necessity of kedging or warping, but quite close to the sea-mouth, some inconsiderate southerly storm would spring up in the middle of a dark night and render the anchorage untenable. The Sound of Plymouth and the Range at Dartmouth at these moments became hardly popular, and it was a matter of complaint among sailors that no lights existed on either side of the Plymouth Cattewater and that the

present excellent light-system leading into Dartmouth was not established.

But tide-lights, such as at Dunkirk, showing from half-flood to half-ebb, were in vogue and of great utility. During the Great War attacks by enemy submarines were occasionally made on ships in the Downs. On November 11, 1914, for example, H.M.S. *Niger* was torpedoed off Deal. Similarly in Stuart times there was always some apprehension for ships lying in the Downs, lest at dead of night the enemy should come sailing up from the southward through clear water and make a surprise attack. The anchored vessels would seem then to be caught in a veritable trap and unable to run before the prevailing S.W. wind, lest they should get on the Brake Sand. It was to overcome this difficulty that two boats with lights were temporarily placed on such occasions at either side of the Brake, so as to lead the retreating ships through the channel; but so soon as these had passed, the lights on the boats were removed and the chasers piled themselves on the sands to destruction.

The use of light-boats, for even so ephemeral a purpose, was certainly the precedent of the more permanent lightship that was bound to come. At the probability of war's outbreak

it was advised to cut down trees, demolish mills, withdraw all buoys and other conspicuous items marking the entrance to harbours and the Thames. Outside the knowledge possessed by local pilots, there was little enough cartographical information, and this home intelligence was strictly guarded from the foreigner as a rule, though there was always a loophole for stratagem or traitor. England's enemy would come either from Spain, France, or Holland. For the two first-mentioned a southerly wind would assist the invaders, whilst it would keep English ships between Penzance and Dover harbour-tied. On the other hand, the north-east wind favourable for the Dutch to reach the Medway would make it impossible for the Chatham units to get out. In extreme cases small harbour entrances could be defended by sinking ships full of stones; and harbour boom-defences, although during the Great War somewhat late in being reintroduced, were considered even by Monson as 'an old invention.'

Indeed, the more one delves into a close study of our gallant ancestors in the still undeveloped sailing-ship age, the more one respects their originality and ingenuity. Science had done precious little to help them,

but personal experience and quiet meditation gave them fresh ideas how to overcome the most difficult problems. Truly the mariners were inspired with that zeal which springs from fear, and the laziest of men will bestir himself to protect his own hearth and home in extreme emergency. But when we think of the restricted facilities available, the limitations of expense, the prejudice of people in high command, it is remarkable that so many problems were tackled so ably. The soldier fights against soldier; but the sailor fights sailor plus sea plus wind. It is therefore a more complicated problem when a contest has to be decided afloat, let the ships and their inventories be of the most primitive. But at the same time it is just this complexity which brings out some of the finest attributes that have been associated with the seafarer's character. Resource, self-reliance, patience in times of disappointment, courage in danger, hope in the hour of hopelessness—these qualities are developed afloat in a specially determining manner.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROFESSION OF PIRACY

WHILST the Moorish pirates of Algiers were only too glad to have the assistance of any renegade Englishmen of the sea, especially for the handling of square-rigged ships, yet the Moors never quite trusted their new allies, and at times even deceived the newly arrived. Still less did these African corsairs repose much confidence in their slaves that had been once honest seamen aboard some Mediterranean-bound trader. At the back of the pirate's mind was the eternal fear that his own crew would one day rise in mutiny and make him a slave.

It was for this reason that, when the Algerines set forth on a roving voyage, by far the greater half of the personnel consisted of their own people who could dominate the European portion. The ratio of three to one and even fifteen to two was not unusual. There was between the Algerines and Tunisians a mutual recognition of each other's sphere of action ;

and whilst one operated to the west, the other worked farther east. Thus the corsairs of Algiers lay in wait for shipping outside the Gibraltar Straits or hung about the south-east coast of Spain. Straits, narrow channels, and headlands have always been the lairs of pirates because thereby passed the traffic in a more or less steady flow. They frequented such Spanish points as Cape de Gata and Cape de Palos in the sure hope that some rich vessel bound to or from Cartagena would soon be their prey.

Of course they knew all about the winds of the Mediterranean, and how to work them to the best advantage. For this reason it was their custom to take advantage of the easterly wind off the Spanish shore when running out into the Atlantic, but to hug the coast of Barbary when coming home. There was always available for them an advanced western base in the Moroccan port of Tctuan, nicely situated within the Straits, and here they could anchor with safety unless the Levanter east wind piped up, when they had to clear out. Otherwise they could rely on the boats coming off to purchase the latest booty, bring off drinking-water, victuals, and even fresh supplies of powder. The latter had been

imported from northern Europe through English and Flemish merchants. The safe harbours of Bona and Bougie were under Algerian protection, and likewise used for victualling and getting rid of booty; whilst the Balearic Isles, as everyone is aware, afforded them, reluctantly, shelter, water, and wood.

The corsairs of Tunis rarely emerged from the Mediterranean, but sailed about off the south of Sardinia, or Cape Passaro at the heel of Sicily, or that historic pirate area among the Ionian Islands. The latter was a risky sphere, for the Venetian naval galleys with sails, masts, big crews of oarsmen, and with bow-guns, were not infrequently to be met with. The Moors feared these Venetians as their deadliest enemies, nor was the Battle of Lepanto yet forgotten. Using handy lateen-sail feluccas, with plenty of men to row as required in light or head winds, the Tunis pirates had an endless series of bays, creeks, and islands wherein to creep for rest and recreation. Such islands as Candia, Lampedusa, Rhodes, and Cyprus could be used; but Tunis itself, being an open roadstead with inadequate protection from the fort, was not for them the ideal base. Algiers, on the

contrary, was protected by a mole and a citadel; and there was a light showing to enable the rovers to get home from the sea.

In accordance with the Mediterranean marine custom, which had gone on from the days of ancient Greece, Moorish craft put to sea not in the winter months, but from May to September as a rule. There was a curious lack of logic displayed in the first quarter of the seventeenth century by the merchants of England and Holland; for, notwithstanding that their countrymen's ships and goods were being stopped and stolen, yet English and Dutch merchants did so much good trade with Algiers as to have a consul resident there as well as business representatives.

But, in regard to pirates generally, who got their living outside the Mediterranean, the coast of Portugal and Spain was like a magnet, and the seasons for visiting different areas were adhered to in the same manner that a fisherman maintains regular connection with the shoals of herring year after year. To seaward of St. Vincent's cape, where Drake was so fond of cruising, was a favourite pirate location from February to May for his seventeenth century successors, so as to entrap the Spanish ships



A GALLEY, EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY



homeward bound inside the Straits. The considerable trade coming from the Baltic in Hanseatic vessels bound for Spain with copper, linen, material for clothes, was also a worthwhile source of booty. Such craft could be awaited off the Burlings or Cape de Roca. The latter was equally an excellent latitude to await the extremely valuable fleet which sailed between Spain and Brazil. To make an attack on this collection of ships might well form the principal event of the pirate's year, and the result might enable him to retire from the sea with wealth and satisfaction.

The prevailing wind off the Iberian peninsula on the Atlantic side being northerly, the pirates used to stand in on the port tack towards the coast during darkness, and away from the shore on the opposite tack by day. Westerly winds, of course, compelled them to keep further off a lee shore. A popular pirate position was to lie between 25 and 50 miles north-west of Cape St. Vincent, so as to cut the track of ships bound in to Cadiz or up the Straits. The only drawback was that, this being a recognised trade-route, you were bound to encounter the well-armed Spanish warships : you must therefore be well-munitioned yourself and able to accept some hard knocks. If, however, you were still

in a small way of business, with your fortune still to make and owning only a moderate-sized craft, then it was better to patrol off Cape Finisterre and pick up a few Galician or Breton ships. In the early part of the year a trip to that narrow channel, the Sound, where traffic between the Baltic and western Europe must needs pass, was always worth while. And when the King of Denmark's men-of-war began to make the place too uncomfortable, the pirate would sail back to the west of Ireland and start refitting.

This overhaul need not be too hurried, for from mid-May to August there was 'little doing' off the Spanish coast; so, as soon as ready, and well filled with victuals, the pirates would sail down to the Azores or across to the Newfoundland Banks, where they could get all they wanted as regards fish, and be back off the south-west of Spain to await the homeward-bound Spanish fleet arriving from the West Indies as well as the outward-bound fleet from Malaga that should come through the Straits this month. As a rule the Canaries were the pirates' farthest south, though some of the most daring went even to the Guinea coast.

One of the problems for a pirate was to find a suitable seclusion, where he could give his

ship's bottom a scrub. Up the Mediterranean this was still more of a difficulty, owing to lack of tide, and the Barbary corsairs had perforce to careen their vessels. Those who cruised about off the Spanish coast were able to go up the Vigo inlet, where the tide would ebb sufficiently to allow a moderate-draught ship to be scrubbed ashore. Stone ballast and fresh water could also be taken aboard at the same time. Of course a pirate high and dry on the ground was in a singularly defenceless condition, both from the natives and the sea. It was accordingly usual to carry out this partial refit in pairs : one ship would ride at anchor afloat as guard vessel, whilst the other cleaned herself, repaired sails, overhauled gear, and made herself ready for further cruising. The amount of geographical and other knowledge which these men gathered in a few years was detailed and invaluable. A modern pirate would be dependent on a base that must keep him supplied with fuel for his engines and lubricating oil : if these two failed, he must surrender. But the sailing-ship pirate always had the satisfaction of knowing that, so long as he had food and water on board, the wind would do the rest. Only when his under-sea hull was becoming so foul that he could neither chase nor evade other

ships quick enough, did it become anxiously necessary to find some quiet little bay protected from the wind and public gaze during a few tides.

But pirates were in most localities regarded as the scum of the sea, the scourge of civilisation. Too many terrible stories had been told of their activities, and too many homes had been made miserable. No willing assistance in any way could be expected, with the only omissions of Ireland and Barbary. Even at the Canaries the ocean-tossed pirate ship was allowed but one day to water : after this his men would be killed or taken prisoners. At the Azores they could water and ballast, but not trade. Better success was available at Newfoundland, but it was a terribly long drag thither, beating against the west and north-west winds which prevailed except in the first half of the year.

To protect this valuable Newfoundland industry from piracy it became necessary to send out men-of-war, especially to escort the convoy home. So extensively had the Newfoundland fishery grown that in the time of Charles I it was not unusual for 300 ships from the west of England to be working off the Banks. It was a strenuous life, with strong tides, hard winds,

and frequent fog ; but there was a good living to be made, except when the pirate ships swept down and took from them fish, cyder, wine, and bread, as well as any stores wanted for the use of the vessels themselves. In spite of the fact that Acts for the suppression of piracy were passed in 1612 and 1614, there was an increase rather than decrease in such offences. It was estimated that in the time of James I there were ten pirates to every one who flourished during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when piracy was (as in the ancient classical days of the Mediterranean) not so much regarded as a crime, but a worthy profession and now giving employment to some four hundred extremely able leaders.

It is easy enough for us to criticise and condemn both the pirates and the lack of active policy to stamp out their roving ; but the problem was not devoid of complication. If you concede the fact that it was no crime for a man to be attracted by seafaring as a career, then he was surely entitled to find a job under that category ; and, if there were in any particular generation not enough jobs to go round, could he be blamed ? The truth was that not sufficient effort was made to find employment for the kind of men who presently were to expand

England beyond the seas and build up a British Empire. The devil finds sins enough for the idle, and a sailor can stand dangers, difficulties, hardships—anything but aimless monotony. The real trouble lay in the fact that not the fisheries, nor the merchant ships, nor the King's ships, could make use of a very fine body of men who, for the most part, embarked on piracy for want of better service.

The surest way to turn a lawless, rollicking, tough sailor from being a criminal into becoming a respectable seaman is not to flaunt Acts of Parliament in his face. If he has any spirit at all, these threats will merely incite him to daredevilry. The proper means should rather be to make all that pluck and adventuresome ability do its right work along the correct channels. The wild man with the red hair who, as a lad, was always getting into trouble at home, ran away to sea, and was always first in every boarding-party that leapt on to the enemy's decks, was just the kind of fellow who would have been invaluable during the Anglo-Dutch wars aboard a royal ship ; or the reliable hand aboard some old East Indiaman which needed snug-ging down in a sudden squall, when to go aloft and out on a yard seemed like meeting death.

No more effectual means of suppressing piracy was possible than the widening of legitimate opportunities for serving at sea. Consequently, when during the seventeenth century the trade to the East Indies gradually rose to notable heights; when, too, the trade from Virginia and New England, as well as the West Indies later on, had settled down into a regular and increasing condition, there were not enough seamen to go round, and piracy was no longer a popular profession. That it continued was inevitable; for there will never be lacking crooks, wantons, and ne'er-do-weels afloat as well as ashore. And the successive ages, when letters of marque gave to privateers their lawful cover, certainly helped to keep alive that illegal longing which exists in the best of us. If to-morrow ninety per cent. of the world's merchant shipping were suddenly banished by mutual international consent, and all the civilised powers decided to scrap their navies, it would most certainly happen that the myriads of hearty seafarers, robbed of their livelihood, would fit out craft and do everything that could be done afloat illegally, from smuggling to piracy on a grand scale.

In the time of James I there were only five legitimate outlets for a sailor, and these five

were each of limited possibilities. First of all there was the local fishing ; but this was still so undeveloped at home, and still in the almost exclusive hands of the Dutch, that it could scarcely tempt more than the very few. Secondly, there was the Newfoundland fishery ; but this was kept strictly to the Devonshire men, and only the hardiest of those could endure it, for it was notoriously 'toilsome.' The Newcastle-London coal trade was steady employment, fairly strenuous, but moderately remunerative. On the other hand, it was rather despised by the deep-sea man, and therefore not over-popular. There remained two services which offered the chance of going afloat in fine big ships, seeing something of the world, with possible fighting thrown in : the East India Company and the King's Navy.

But, here, again, there were drawbacks. The Jacobean sailor had heard all the yarns of the unhealthy fevers of the Orient, the terrible gales of wind off the Cape of Good Hope, the long tediousness of the Indian voyage : he could not yet see further than this, and there was not yet sufficient reward to tempt him away from home and family for two or three years at a time. And as for the royal ships, the food was so bad and the pay so poor that to serve in the

Navy of England was regarded as the equivalent of slavery aboard a galley. Still, the times were approaching when the long wars with Holland and France, the development of India and America, the voyages of discovery and the resultant increase of trade, the improvement in shipbuilding, and the growing love of seafaring, would revolutionise all this reluctance.

By the year 1618 administrative abuses had so overwhelmed the English Navy that a body of commissioners had to be appointed under Sir John Coke to deal with the matter. Waste, bribery, embezzlement, deceit, pilfering, and dishonesty were far too rampant. The only active service which was performed by James's Navy was in 1620, when it was sent against the pirates at Algiers ; but this expedition was largely a concession to keep peace with Spain, and, apart from obtaining the release of forty English captives, the undertaking was a failure, and not likely to attract recruits. The fact that there was in some cases illicit reward passing from pirate to the naval officer who had been sent to hunt him down, did not make for the good of the service or for the extermination of a maritime evil. There was indeed a curious reluctance, an amazing hesitancy, towards the corsairs of this time, which illustrates the

power that had been obtained by lawless men.

For example, when that fleet of eighteen ships in 1620 was sent under Sir Robert Mansell against Algiers, this officer was forbidden to perform any hostile act against the place itself, or to forfeit the Dey's amity: Mansell was merely to wipe out the pirates. Under such instructions Mansell's mission was clearly worthless. So, also, there was a lack of firm, definite, and comprehensive policy in regard to the suppression of pirates off the coast of Ireland; and the hope of obtaining relief by parleying, and eventually obtaining a complete pardon by payment, all helped to keep the gentle art of piracy in a living condition.

Let no one imagine that this profession was just one grand time of idleness and luxury punctuated by a few short assaults on weaker vessels. For the captain it was a time of anxiety, since his crew would never have sailed on such a cruise except that they were, as Mainwaring called them, 'of all men the most uncivil and barbarous'; and who could say when the royal ships of England or Spain would give him the knock-out blow? The discipline aboard these outlawed craft was as severe as in the naval

men-of-war, and the fear of certain punishment was allowed to dig deep in. Some of them had time to regret their choice of work, and feared for the future when their services would no longer be required, though the gallows might still be awaiting ashore.¹

Intelligence as to what was going on in Spain could be ascertained by sending off a ship's boat to lie under the Burling Islands at night so as to capture fishermen at dawn, who could be brought aboard ship and cross-examined as to the sailing of the West Indies fleet. Such natives were afterwards useful in case the Spanish ships might be sighted at night: for with a dagger at each man's heart, and being ordered by the English captain to speak in Spanish as ordered, the prisoners could be made to hail and obtain valuable information without the other side suspecting. It was not unusual for the King of Spain to send out a royal pilot to meet the homecoming West Indies fleet at sea and give them letters of advice as to what course they were to use. To preserve secrecy, in case he should fall into pirates' hands, these letters could be hidden in the soles of the pilot's shoes.

¹ There was a current English proverb that 'Marriage and hanging go by destiny.'

Many of these pirates had begun life in the manner that Monson related of himself :

‘ I was a youth of sixteen years of age, and so inclined to see the world abroad that without the knowledge of father or mother I put myself into an action by sea, where there was in company of us two small ships, fitted for men of war, that authorised us by commission to seize upon the subjects of the King of Spain. We departed from the Isle of Wight, to which place we returned with our dear bought prize : she was a Biscainer of three hundred tons, well manned, sufficiently furnished, and bravely defended. She came from Grand Bay, in Newfoundland, which at our first arrival upon the coast of Spain we met with, and refusing to yield to us we suddenly boarded and by consent of all our men entered her ; but the waves of the sea growing high we were forced to ungrapple, and to leave our men fighting on board her from eight of the clock in the evening till eight in the morning.’

Very satisfactory it was, when lying off the Burlings, to find merchant ships coming from the north with supplies of gunpowder for the Spanish service : there was a chuckle of delight in performing an act of patriotism

when simultaneously these English sailors were helping themselves. But we have, too, scant records of pirate crews perishing of starvation, or their ships becoming total losses in bad weather. These were real hazards which had to be accepted, and made the life still more of a gamble. The loss of masts was not infrequent, and could be overcome, provided a lee shore was not adjacent. But when in a heavy gale the guns broke adrift it was a time of high excitement. The rolling of the ship would carry the guns from side to side; crashing through the hull, these heavy pieces speedily suffered the sea to enter and sink the vessel with all hands.

Care was taken to get the best out of these somewhat clumsy vessels. Ballast would be shifted about and the ship trimmed till she was found to sail better. The old seaman's dodge of finding whether she liked her stays eased up slightly, or set taut; the wedging of the masts tight home, or giving them some play; these little experiments were always being made in the endeavour to improve a ship's going. But especially was this true of pirate vessels and Scotsmen. The latter 'are the best in the world to find out the trim of a ship, for they will never be quiet, but try

her all ways, and if there be any goodness in her they will make her go.'

At sea, with the ship's company divided into the two watches of starboard and larboard, each respectively under the master and first mate, the duties of trimming sails, pumping and so on, continued for periods of four hours. But when riding in a harbour or roadstead the anchor watch consisted of only a quarter of the men normally on duty at one time. In tacking ship the routine was thus: As the helm was put down, the hands let fly the sheet of the foresail and let go the fore-bowline, and the weather brace of the foresail was hauled on hard. Similarly the topsail and t'gallantsails were treated, though at first the sheets were kept fast; finally tacks, sheets, braces, and bowlines of the sails on the main-mast were trimmed in a manner exactly opposite to that when the ship was sailing on the other tack. As the men could not be trusted from stealing even parts of the ship's rope cable, the strands at the end were for two feet undone and then pointed. Thus it could be seen in a moment whether the end had been cut off.

The ordinary sounding-lead weighed 7 lbs. and was about a foot long, its line consisting

of not less than 20 fathoms. This was employed when navigating in shoal water, and was marked at two, three, five, seven, ten, and fifteen fathoms. The deep-sea lead was of twice the above weight, though the deep-sea line itself was thinner than the other, being marked at twenty, thirty, forty fathoms, and so on. When a ship was sounding her way through some narrow channel the master or mate was usually aloft and shouting to the steersman below : ' Starboard ! ' or ' Larboard ! ' or ' Helm amidships ! ' Many a curse did the helmsman receive from this officer, as he stood aloft conning the ship. ' Sometimes,' related Mainwaring, ' he who conds the ship will be speaking to him at the helm at every little yaw ; which the seafaring men love not, as being a kind of disgrace to their steerage.'

One has to remember that sea-fights were not the short and concentrated affairs such as modern shells bring about, but often enough they lasted for as long as three days. Large crews were essential because there was so much work to be done, and it was reckoned that a merchant ship needed at least double the number of hands as would barely be able to sail her. A pirate vessel or a ship of war

obviously required bigger crews still. The English ship-builders had a rule by which to give the deep-sea vessels so much overhang forward as was more than a third but less than a half of the length on keel. The French preferred even more overhang, whilst the Flemings cared for less.

From the pirate's deck practically every ship sighted was an enemy. He could recognise the flags which implied not merely nationality, but the ships of the senior officers. Thus an admiral flew his flag in the maintop, a vice-admiral in the foretop, and a rear-admiral in the mizzen-top. Flags were also employed for signalling such orders as 'Chase,' 'Cease chase,' 'Come on board for a council'; but these signals were very few. Pirate ships able to find a snug hard for scrubbing the hull might have to go a long while ere another chance occurred. The foul stuff was burnt off, and then sometimes the bottom was given only a coat of tallow. This was not recommended, as it soon got dirty again. The best recipe in the early seventeenth century was to boil train-oil, rosin, and brimstone together and then lay it on.

The great trouble with these ships which roamed about in warm waters notorious for

worm was how to keep the hull from being seriously pierced. When the sixteenth-century Hawkins arrived in Brazil he said that he found his ship's hull below water 'covered with these worms, as big as the little finger of a man. . . . In little time, if the ship be not sheathed, they put all in hazard ; for they enter in no bigger than a small Spanish needle . . . yea, I have seen many ships so eaten, that the most of their planks under water have been like honey-combs, and especially those betwixt wind and water. If they had not been sheathed it had been impossible that they could have swum.'

This casing of the hull was done in various ways. In Spain and Portugal lead was used, but this made the ships both heavy and costly. English ships used half-inch elm boards, on the inside of which was smeared tar 'half a finger thick,' and then 'another half-finger thick of hair.' The sheathing board was then nailed to the hull, but not higher than the waterline. Hawkins's theory was that when the worm passed through the outer board 'the hair and the tar so involve him that he is choked therewith.' Mainwaring was of a similar opinion. 'The thinner the boards,' advised this experienced rover, 'the better,

for then the worm will presently be at the tar (which he cannot abide) and so hath not means nor room to work in and out of the plank ; and so will eat away more when it is thick than when it is thin.'

In heavy weather, when the steersman was having difficulty with the helm, he had a couple of blocks seized to the inboard end of the helm, one at each side. Through these blocks were rove small ropes or falls, like the gunner's tackles, which led to each of the ship's sides. By this means a greater control was possible. Identically the same practice obtains to-day in the bigger sailing yachts not fitted with wheel-steering. It may be asserted that these old-timers were none too easy for steering. Merchantmen were worse than men-of-war, because the former were not sweet-lined, but built to carry the most cargo. Still, it was an interesting sight to watch them coming down such a river as the Thames with an ebb tide, but wind against them. Not being able to sail close to the wind, they preferred kedging to making short tacks in narrow waters. Unless the breeze was stronger than the tide, the ships would proceed stern first down stream, but with foresail, or foretopsail, and mizzen set, so as to steer her if she got too near either

shore. Ahead of her was the ship's boat connected by a hawser, and at the end of the hawser was a kedge anchor which could be let go at once if otherwise the ship's head refused to pay off. It is not surprising that with this kind of seamanship one finds such a long time being spent coming down even from Blackwall to the Nore.

If the conditions aboard even the royal ships were not pleasant for the men, it can scarcely be claimed that the officers were given either too much space or luxury. There is on record Viscount Conway's cruise in the *Triumph*, which in bad weather prevented them from sleeping or eating quietly. And one night, whilst at supper, a roll of the ship threw all the dishes to the floor; but whilst one individual was trying to salve a shoulder of mutton he sat down on the sauce of one dish with his feet in another.

Certainly, whether in pirate, merchantman, or man-of-war, going to sea in the seventeenth century was no mere pleasure cruising.

CHAPTER V

THE THRILL OF ADVENTURE

IN the history of maritime adventures few sections show so continuous and brave a persistency as those which comprise the attempts to find a North-West Passage through Arctic waters to the Pacific Ocean. From the fifteenth to the twentieth century, through generations of mariners and in all kinds of ships, there is a wonderful sequence of endeavours, beginning from 1497 with Cabot. The attempts made by Frobisher, Davis, Hudson, Button, Bylot, Baffin, Fox, and others are proof enough that the sixteenth and seventeenth century merchants were still confident that a secret way might be found north-about from Europe to the Orient. And it was in spite of the commercial fruitlessness of all these endeavours that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were willing to carry on the quest. In the earlier stages the hope of finding gold was a great incentive, but the idea was at last to die through lack of support,

though not till many an investor had lost considerable sums of money.

The one great commercial result has been the Hudson Bay Company, dating back to 1670; but there survives also an amazing record of ships and seamen going through the most perilous escapes with the narrowest margin. Some of these intrepid discoverers have left their names, which are still attached to islands, capes, and peninsulas, straits, bays, and channels. But others left behind also their ships and their own very bones. If to wander through parts of France is akin to venturing through a wine-list, so a modern navigator with his chart of these northern chilly seas is reminded at every glance of the great navigators who burst their way through heavy weather and treacherous ice into the frozen unknown. And the contest between shipman and the forces of Arctic nature is as grand a drama as any epic poet could demand.

To-day Arctic or Antarctic discovery is scarcely a great gamble. It demands pluck, endurance, ability to suffer a certain amount of monotony and inconvenience. But wireless telegraphy, the possibility of relief ships being sent on request, the perfect equipment in respect of scientific instruments, immense

supplies of ideal food properly preserved, and, above all, the possession of a specially constructed vessel capable of resisting ice-pressure to considerable limits, these have all robbed the undertaking of the worst risks. And there is at hand so much geographical as well as other knowledge gathered by previous pioneers, that a twentieth-century discoverer can advance by easy stages instead of plunging into unascertained emptiness.

The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century captains were expecting to find the flood-stream coming in from the west at any of the numerous bays and inlets westward of Greenland. Cape Farewell was, so to speak, the gate of admittance into the White World. Every expedition-leader came home with his own theory that such a river or such a gulf would at its further end surely connect up with the Western Sea, over which in our own time motor-driven air-craft have since carried human beings in safety. In the olden days the returned mariner would confer with the mathematician, a definite opinion would result therefrom, and in due time another little expedition of two ships would go north to test the latest notion.

Sometimes the vessels would miss their

objective and get driven by wind or ice, or both, into a bay, there to remain for five months or longer, with such damage that when the chance of escape again came round, they did nothing but hurry south to England. Always they seemed so near finding the mysterious and puzzling North-West Passage that had eluded their ancestors, but every time their hopes were disappointingly ended. Thus one particular vessel might be employed on such a northern voyage as many as five times. Apart from the fact that the backers had their pride tickled by the titling of certain territory after their own surnames (e.g. Smith Sound, and Cape Wolstenholme, whose appellations still survive from their seventeenth-century knightly namesakes), it was one long category of failure so far as monetary result was desired. Whale-fishing was certainly encouraged, but this was not the real aim of getting together capital, ships, captains, and taking big risks.

Before the middle of the seventeenth century the explorers had concluded definitely in their minds that the high tides found by the Arctic Circle must have been propagated by the Western Ocean: it was inconceivable that such a vast quantity of water should rise and fall every twelve hours, if it were not fed from

some vast ocean to the westward. But sometimes for a generation all this North-West enthusiasm died down after an expedition had ended disastrously. Then, as a result of re-studying the accounts of previous mariners, a new interest would be awakened half a century later, controversies would be occasioned as to the reason for such high tides, and then to settle the matter another expedition would be sent.

Thus by the year 1746, which falls in one of the least progressive periods in the world's history, the opinion of scientists and sailors was still firmly in favour of there being a North-West channel, notwithstanding all previous failures. This was based not merely on reason and experience, but on that vague, time-old tradition which in the past had led to the discovery of a route to America, and was strengthened by the abiding optimism on the part of the great navigators after each failure. It was now believed that no passage was to be expected *viâ* Davis Straits and Baffin Bay, but by the west side of Hudson Bay; that therefore, after examining the inlets on this side, success would eventually come. So we find a number of distinguished eighteenth-century Englishmen, as an expression of their national sense of duty,

subscribing to fit out yet another expedition. The subscribers included several members of the peerage, the episcopate, a number of gentlemen and merchants, who believed these inlets could be searched till the North-West Passage was found.

The prime mover was a Mr. Arthur Dobbs, and the British Government so far encouraged the promoters as to promise a reward of £20,000 if the discovery was made. The investors got together £10,000 in £100 shares, and two ships were obtained: the *Dobbs Galley*, of 180 tons burthen, and the *California*, of 140 tons. The money also enabled them to be refitted and suitably strengthened. At this time the British mercantile marine was already several thousand ships in actual numbers, though most of them were under 300 tons in burthen; and it was the East India Company whose vessels were the backbone of the nation's commercial power afloat. But seafaring was still barely adolescent, and by the beginning of that century only about 27,000 men were employed as merchant mariners. It was an age, too, when ships of commerce had to be armed, and no voyage could be guaranteed free of fighting.

Still, Great Britain since 1713 had become

ruler of the seas, though a certain decadence had set in afloat, not merely in regard to naval tactics, but to the material and workmanship expended on building vessels. The crews were generally a rough crowd who were compelled to live on bad food in quarters where sunlight was shut out. Drunkenness, hard swearing, desertion, and even mutiny were frequent offences ; but the vileness of their immediate environment, the heavy-handed discipline which they had to bear, and the unquestionable courage which these sailors exhibited, must be remembered as the other side of a crowded picture.

The *Dobbs Galley* and *California* were given adequate consumable as well as other stores, and the Admiralty agreed to exempt from being pressed into the naval service, for a period of three years, all who embarked in these two ships. The crew were paid exceptionally well, but a bonus was also given to each man and officer proportionately, a captain's share being £500. And if they captured any enemy prize at sea, such should belong entirely to the two ships. Thus by May 1746 all things were ready, and on the tenth of that month they dropped down the Thames as far as Gravesend. Here the two captains waited

till they received a long list of written instructions for a voyage intended 'for the discovery of a passage to the Western and Southern Ocean of America, through Hudson Straits.' These two were to sail in company to the southward of Cape Farewell, Greenland, thence to Hudson Strait, keeping close to the north shore in that channel. Several points were named as rendezvous; the first ship to reach there and proceed was to leave a letter by an erected pole or heap of stones.

At a point called Cary's Swan's Nest, which may be identified with the east of Southampton Island marked on modern maps, they might wait if the wind was ahead, and carefully observe the direction, velocity, height, and time of the tide. Thence they were to carry on to the west side of Hudson Bay, continue their tidal investigations, and boldly explore any opening wherein the flood was seen to come from the west. If they should get through what we know as Wager Bay (but was thought by them to be a strait) and reach the Western Sea, they could proceed to the south-west, 'keeping the American Land in view to the larboard.' If they found whales heading S.W. that would be a further proof of a navigable passage to the Western Ocean. They were to go

no further south than Lat. 40° N., and, on the way back N.E. along the west American coast, charts should be made containing the rivers, bays, headlands, and so on.

It is interesting to note that all difficulties and doubts as to procedure during this voyage were to be decided by a council consisting of the two captains, the mates, and a gentleman who went as the company's representative. The freedom of action conceded to a modern leader of such an expedition was not deemed advisable owing to possible abuse.

Not till May 20, 1746, did the ships drop down from Gravesend the short distance down the Thames to that portion of the river known as the Hope, where they waited another four days, only to learn that four vessels of the Hudson Bay Company (who were to sail together) and H.M.S. *Loo* (40 guns), their escort, had already sailed from the Nore. The two exploration vessels therefore hurried on and joined up with the convoy in Houseley Bay, just below Orfordness. Four days were spent at anchor in Yarmouth Roads, and then these six vessels, together with some others, also bound across the Atlantic, continued up the North Sea under *Loo's* protection. On June 2 they anchored off Tynemouth, where one of the

mates went ashore, and, in spite of signals, as well as the firing of guns, he never came back. Doubtless there was a woman in the case.

Owing to heavy weather, the fleet sheltered in the Orkneys. Leaving there for the west on June 12 with a fair wind, the escort parted from the convoy five days later, and on the following day the two exploration ships parted from the Hudson Bay craft. So the voyage continued as the *Dobbs* and *California* plunged, rolled, and creaked to the Atlantic swell. On the night of June 21 an alarming accident occurred aboard the former owing to the negligence of the cabin-boy, who was in the 'great cabin' and had been left to take care of the candle. The captain and officers being on deck, out of sight, the boy forgot all about the danger, with the result that the night was soon illumined by ugly flames. The fire, fanned by the wind, became a raging furnace and reached the powder-room, which was immediately below. Here were stored matches, spirits, candles, about thirty barrels of powder, and all sorts of combustibles.

This unfortunate accident struck everyone with horror, and it was expected that the big explosion would come any moment. Amid the prayers of some, the cries and curses of others,

Dobbs's crew were kept busy passing along buckets of water. But the discipline was not so good as to prevent individuals trying to carry out their own wishes. Thus, some began cutting the lashings with a view to hoisting out the boats, and then changed their minds before the operation was completed ; others shook out the reefs in the topsails so as to get more speed and reach *California*, who was some distance ahead. But, amid all this confused energy, the helmsman, whose position was right over the blazing powder-room, became so concerned with his own safety that he forgot his duty and let the ship run up into the wind. The position now was that *Dobbs* was out of control, sails banging about and making a noise like thunder-claps, with sheets and braces leaping like giant eels, until she suddenly paid off and ran before the wind, which, of course, had the effect of spreading the fire further forward. But, finally, just when it seemed impossible to avoid being blown sky-high, the crew succeeded in getting the flames down. The ship was saved and the voyage continued, though it was a bad beginning.

Such incidents aboard the old wooden vessels were by no means rare ; and only half a century previously that historic *Sovereign of the Seas*,

which had once been the pride of the British Navy, but was afterwards rebuilt, suffered destruction at Chatham through the carelessness of her boatswain, who had left a lighted candle on a shelf in his cabin when he went up on deck to keep his watch.

Dobbs and her sister reached the eastern end of Hudson Straits on July 8, and, owing to foggy weather, nearly got ashore. Fortunately the veil lifted in time, or both vessels would have been wrecked on Resolution Island. As so often happens in thick weather, the wind dropped, leaving a tumbling sea. It was only by recourse to sweeps and by sending the ship's boats to tow ahead that *Dobbs* got clear. By August 19 they had reached across Hudson Bay to Marble Island on the west side. Here the longboats from each vessel in charge of the chief mates were sent to obtain data as to the tides. A report was made to the council, and then it was decided to seek a suitable place for winter quarters.

Port Nelson, on the river of that name, at the south-west corner of Hudson Bay, was accordingly chosen as being clear of ice the soonest, besides affording wood for the galley fires, venison, and other food. Now, after sailing through snow, sleet, and dense fog, the ships

arrived off that river on August 25. The entrance being made dangerous by some nasty shoals, the ships anchored outside, whilst their boats went in to sound a channel and erect a flag as a leading mark. *California* got in safely, but *Dobbs* was again unlucky. She got aground on the flats, and in the meantime she attracted the attention of the Hudson Bay Company's Governor, who was in charge at the adjacent station of York Fort. He was distinctly displeased to see even British ships arrive ; for the Company was very jealous of its close trading rights, and he feared his own countrymen had come to trespass. The Governor's first act was to send a boat and cut down that useful beacon, but none the less the *Dobbs* was able to float off and come to anchor up the river near the *California*.

The Governor continued his unfriendly attitude, in spite of all assurance that there was no intention to molest the Company's trade. However, he was not able physically to send them away, and the result was that the visitors chose a suitable place in a creek, landed provisions and stores, buried their beer in a hole twelve feet deep, and brought all hands ashore for the winter. There ensued a busy scene of sailors cutting down trees and making therewith

conical-shaped huts, the interstices being stuffed with moss over which were layers of clay. A low small door gave entrance, and a fireplace was put in the middle of this wigwam.

But to house the officers a site was chosen on an eminence half a mile from the creek. Timber was hewn, planks were sawn, and gradually there was erected a two-storey house 28 ft. long by 18 ft. broad. The captain and some of the principal officers were to inhabit the upper storey, which had 7 ft. of head-room, whilst the assistant officers, subalterns, and servants had the lower floor. With sailor-like thoroughness this dwelling was erected, a door 5 ft. high being placed in the middle; then came the stairs and windows, whilst a central stove was placed so that everyone could partake of its heat. By November much ice and snow had arrived, the creek was frozen over, and it was so bitterly cold that the ink froze solid even by the fire. In spite of having packed the bottled beer in tow, it remained solid ice even when placed by the fire also.

Rabbits and partridges were killed for food, beavers were trapped to make fur coats, and then it was decided to lengthen and raise the topsides of and deck the longboat for exploration use, lest the ships should be lost on such an undiscovered coastline. So the men were now kept

at work in order to have her ready by the spring. The boat was drawn ashore at the creek side, and a log-tent built over her, with a fireplace in the middle, so that the carpenters could continue in spite of the winter. It was an energetic little community which had grown up ashore in spite of the Hudson Bay Company's Governor. The heating arrangements were primitive and awkward, though there was no lack of wood. The stove was made of brick, measuring 6 ft. long, 2 ft. wide, and 3 ft. high. When, however, the wood was nearly burnt the custom was to throw the brands out and stop the chimney-top. This produced a suffocating smell, but it created such heat that, notwithstanding the rigorous cold outside, the men perspired freely. At night when the fire went out, the habitation became so cold that the men's breaths settled in a white hoar frost on the blankets. Several of the party had their faces and toes frost-bitten, the one thermometer had unluckily been broken on the voyage out, some casks of beer burst their iron hoops and then the contents continued rigid, but even the mosquitoes (for which that country is notorious in the summer) were chilled into a solid lump. At Christmas time two casks of brandy were obtained from York Fort, but with baneful

effect. Hitherto the men had been healthy, but now they indulged too freely in spirits, and scurvy began its dread toll. Assistance was sought of the Hudson Bay Company's Governor, but was refused. Furthermore, he forbade the Indians to come near or to trade food. Scarcely one person of the two ships escaped the disease, and burials followed.

By the end of February orders were given to cut the ice away from the ships ; in the next month sickness became rarer and the deaths fewer. In May the longboat was completed and launched, the ships were refitted and being got ready for sea, stores were taken aboard, so that just before the end of June, with a fair wind, the vessels sailed away through much broken ice northward by the western shore up Hudson Bay. The longboat, which had been named *Resolution*, was provisioned for two months, and in her went a couple of officers with eight hands to explore, whilst the ships were commanded to make for Marble Island, which is still shown on our modern maps.

Resolution was able to acquire valuable information as to the tides, examined the inlets on the western side northwards, and narrowly escaped shipwreck. But the hoped-for passage, with its flood coming in from the

north-west, could not be discovered, and they rejoined the two ships at Marble Island disappointed. As these vessels proceeded northwards, through ice and by rocky shoals, they did not fail to notice how prosperous a whale fishery might hereabouts be carried on. At last, however, by the end of July they came to Wager 'Strait,' in order definitely to settle whether this was a passage or a mere bay. Certainly the fact was established that the tide ran 'like a sluice,' which carried *California* round and round several times. A council was held after the ships came to anchor, and it was decided to send the boats up with the flood 'to determine whether it is a passage to the Western ocean of America or not.'

A week was accordingly spent thus, exploring through scenery gloomy and depressing with shattered crags, icicles hanging like organ-pipes in rows from cliffs, and terrible rocks that seemed to have been at war with nature. The sound of the tide, where it was confined in a narrow area, alarmed the explorers, and the further that advance was made the less likely seemed an exit at the far end. One man was lost overboard by the mainsail of *California's* boat during the night and never seen again. Altogether displeased with results,

the boats came back to the ships and another council was held. Whilst the majority were fully satisfied there was no westward opening, yet two officers were doubtful, so it was resolved immediately to send *Resolution* to make further investigation, in spite of the fact that there was already no little sickness among the crews and the season was getting too advanced. In fact, there was a general desire to quit these inhospitable regions and reach their English homes.

But at last the council were able to agree that Wager Bay had no other exit than its eastern access, and thus was settled a dispute which had been going on for some time in England. This was negative information, but it disposed of a wrong theory and cleared the mind for further efforts. It was also to prove that Mr. Dobbs, the enthusiastic promoter of the expedition, was among those who had placed their hopes on false premises. The time had now come to sail south, so the *Resolution* was cast adrift, and the two ships emerged through Hudson Strait at the beginning of September, but got caught in heavy weather, which was all the more trying as the rigging was damaged and there were very few hands sufficiently well to remain on deck. The

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Orkneys were reached before the end of September 1747, thence the two vessels sailed down the North Sea in company of four Hudson Bay ships convoyed by H.M.S. *Mercury* (20 guns), and safely reached Great Yarmouth. Thus ended a voyage on which high hopes had been set, not only in England, but in other European countries. It was, however, merely another of those fruitless endeavours.

And yet it was not so unproductive as wholly to be without influence. The interest in the North-West Passage was kept alive; in 1818 Ross went out with Parry to Baffin Bay, and rather confirmed than added to knowledge. In 1819, however, Parry took out the two ships *Hecla* and *Griper* from the Thames, sailed through Lancaster Sound, charted the islands of North Devon, Cornwall, Bathurst, Melville, North Somerset and Banks, penetrating to almost Long. 114° W. Further discoveries were made by him a little later, and so each successive adventurer brought back his quota of knowledge, contributing to the grand collection which enabled Captain M'Clure and his crew in the expedition of 1850-4 to make the North-West Passage by ice from the south-west to Melville Sound; and Amundsen in 1905 to reach Alaska in the *Gjoa* through



‘HECLA’ AND ‘GRIPER’ IN WINTER HARBOUR
Expedition of 1819



that channel which had perplexed generations of intrepid men. Thus the intervening efforts of Franklin and others, of whom some have already been mentioned, were indeed no more useless than are the intervening rungs on a ladder which reaches from desire to attainment.

The whole is made up of its parts, and the man who waits long enough to assemble these portions gets the credit of solving the puzzle; but it is impossible to assess too highly the magnificent seamanship and perseverance of those who risked ships and lives in gaining just a little more geographical information. In the following voyage these two qualities were put under the severest test. A reference to a map of northern Canada will show that the previously mentioned Wager Bay gives out its waters into a long corridor which for generations has been known as (Sir Thomas) Rowe's Welcome and separates Southampton Island from the mainland or North-West Territory. At the top of Rowe's Welcome lies Repulse Bay, and immediately north of that comes the Melville Peninsula. Now in 1824 the British Admiralty sent out an expedition under Captain G. F. Lyon, R.N., an extremely able officer, to carry out certain duties under the instructions of Earl Bathurst.

Captain Lyon was given the 180-ton gun-brig *Griper*, in which he was to reach either Wager Bay or Repulse Bay; and then, having left that ship in either of these places, he was to cross Melville Peninsula and examine the region on the other side, making observations as to the tides, currents, and other details. *Griper* had been specially strengthened for Arctic work and was well provisioned. In addition to Captain Lyon, she carried two lieutenants, a purser, assistant surveyor, midshipman, assistant surgeon, gunner, seven petty officers, one corporal of marines, and twenty-five able seamen.

On June 10, 1824, she left the naval yard at Deptford and dropped down the Thames to Greenhithe. Three days later she had reached the Nore, where she found awaiting her H.M.S. *Snap*, a surveying vessel which was to accompany H.M.S. *Griper* with stores until near the Hudson Straits; after which *Snap* was to part company and proceed to Newfoundland. At the Nore *Griper's* crew were given three months' advance pay, and, after the men's wives had been sent ashore, the two vessels weighed anchor. The voyage up the North Sea was slow owing to head winds, calms, and fog. *Griper* was of necessity heavily

laden, and pitched very deeply in the swell.

In Sinclair Bay, Caithness, the Scotch pilot nearly got *Griper* ashore in a fog. After a brief stay at Stromness, the two vessels left on July 3 and began the Atlantic crossing, during part of which *Snap* took the other in tow. The Labrador coast was sighted on the first of August, and presently all requisite stores, including, luckily, a spare bower anchor, were taken from *Snap*. The result was that *Griper's* narrow decks were crowded with casks, hawsers, and cables, the launch was filled above her gunwales, and even the captain's cabin was lumbered up with gear. This vessel had already been with Captain Parry to the Arctic, yet she was not the most seaworthy of craft, being very sharp forward.

On August 4 the two parted company, *Snap* going off in accordance with her previous orders, whilst *Griper* entered the pack ice off Hudson Strait. Captain Lyon's ship was a bad sailer and unhandy, but by working the tides she was off Resolution Island and to the southward two days later. Almost immediately it was noticed that there was local attraction within the Strait, causing errors in the compasses: a matter of great seriousness in a region of rock, strong tides and thick

weather. It was not till August 20 that they were off Cape Wolstenholme, that is the western end of the strait ; and then, crossing over, coasted down the south-east side of Southampton Island, the compasses being again rendered useless. After passing Carey's Swan's Nest, *Griper* had some difficulty in rounding Cape Southampton, the south-west extremity of the island. There was a strong tide, and a gale from the north-west kicked up an ugly sea, short and dangerous. For three hours *Griper* was unmanageable, and pitched her bowsprit every time into the waves. Every moment it was expected that the masts would go over the side, and the crew were kept on deck in readiness. The vessel now demonstrated beyond all doubt that even in a moderate sea she would scarcely move except when kept well off the wind. Twice the tiller broke adrift and a couple of men were bruised in the ugly race off this headland.

But the wind backed to south-west and enabled them to lay right up the coast of Southampton into Rowe's Welcome. Here Lyon found, as the *Dobbs* and *California* had previously experienced, that the compasses again became useless : they would rest wherever directed by the finger, and lost all magnetic

quality for a while. But steering at night by the Pole Star and running under easy sail, they continued to make progress, with the lead sounding the whole time and all hands ready to come on deck at once.

It was now the first of September, and some exciting hours were to follow. From the meagre hydrographic knowledge and indifferent charts, obtained as a result of previous pioneers up this waterway, it is not surprising that Lyon was navigating with extreme anxiety, well knowing that nothing was more reliable than the use of his sounding lead and a careful vigilance. Thus, whilst it was still night, it suddenly shoaled from twenty-five to nineteen fathoms. At dawn this depth dropped to seventeen, and land was sighted to the N.N.W., though blurred and indefinite owing to fog. Lyon thought this was part of the mainland of the American continent on the western shore facing Southampton Island. Therefore he naturally kept it to port, and intended to leave it at a distance of five or six miles.

Now the water soon dropped to fifteen fathoms, and he bore away to starboard still more, only to find that, instead of deepening, the soundings fell to ten fathoms. A still further shock was that in the faint light he was

surrounded by white water. Any seaman can picture for himself the harassing situation amid that cold gloom and threatening danger. So at 7 a.m. the worried captain let go his starboard anchor, and brought up with seventy fathoms of chain. In any ordinary blow this should have held her easily ; but there was such a hard wind and the sea was so heavy that within half an hour *Griper* parted her cable. The vessel was now properly trapped, for, though sail was at once made and she stood away to the north-east, she found she was in only seven fathoms and would not claw off the lee shore. She refused to look at the sea that was sweeping in, but just kept on jumping into the same hole without any steerage way. It was quite obvious that, unless she was extraordinarily lucky, *Griper* was going to be shipwrecked.

Here she was on an unexplored lee shore against which was blowing an Arctic gale of vicious force. There was now a tremendous sea running, and the time was about 8.30 a.m. The depth had fallen to five and a half fathoms, and the ship was drawing over sixteen feet aft. There was, under the circumstances, only one thing to be done, and that was to anchor again, though no one would care to do so if he could possibly help it at such a crisis. Captain

Lyon was most reluctant, but he now let go three bower anchors and then a stream anchor. Even with this exceptional precaution there was no suspense from destruction. The *Griper* behaved atrociously, kept pitching her bows right under the white, breaking seas, and putting such terrible jerks on the cables that at noon the starboard bower parted altogether.

The next fear was that even if the other anchors held and no cables snapped, the ship would probably be lost through hitting the bottom, and breaking her back. A simple calculation made this all too apparent. Five and a half fathoms meant thirty-three feet. It was known that the rise and fall of the tide up Rowe's Welcome was from twelve to fifteen feet, and this information showed the value of the work done by such predecessors as the *Dobbs* and *California*. Fifteen from thirty-three left only eighteen feet at low tide, so that *Griper's* keel in a perfectly still sea would have less than two feet of water under it ; but, with all this heavy plunging, she must inevitably come down with destructive results. It was for this reason that the captain had the longboat hoisted out and dropped aft of the brig, so as to get a little lee and be ready to take off all the hands that she could carry.

The excellent discipline aboard this naval brig was one of the most striking features of the whole voyage. Officers drew lots for the respective five boats, and the men stood at their stations on the crowded decks, over which the seas continued to break mercilessly. Every officer and man well knew that only those in the longboat had the smallest chance of being saved, and that the other four boats would either be swamped in the act of launching or would founder immediately after. Still, men and officers drew their lots and stood by as if it were just a matter of routine, and awaited the order to lower, a few stores and arms having first been provided.

During the afternoon there was a slight clearance in the weather, which revealed a low beach astern, where the surf was spending itself to such a height that no boat could have lived. At 3 p.m. a cast of the lead indicated that the tide had fallen to twenty-two feet, which allowed only six feet below the keel; and immediately one terrific sea picked her up and dropped her with great violence till she struck the bottom for the whole of the keel's length. This was taken as a signal to be prepared for a quick departure in the five boats. With the falling tide she kept on striking every

few minutes, when some unusually big scend in the sea arrived. It had been hoped to hang on in the boats to the brig's stern, but would there be any stern left ?

The scene on deck during the fading daylight was misery itself. Owing to the shallowness of the water, the seas had become breakers rather than waves, and the ship herself was little better than an obstruction over which an incessant torrent poured along the decks till it was like a river. All hands were nervously and physically weary, some of them having scarcely been below for twenty-four hours, whilst Captain Lyon himself had been so anxious about the navigation that he had not been in bed for three nights. (And anyone who has gone without sleep for that period feels his eyes getting smaller, his vitality weakened, and his courage impaired : he is in no fit condition to endure worse trials.) Still, there was an even greater reason for making the best of an impossible job of work. It was time to have a meal, even if they were all about to perish. ' Although few or none of us had any idea that we should survive the gale,' wrote Captain Lyon, ' we did not think that our comforts should be entirely neglected, and an order was therefore given to the men to put on

their best and warmest clothing, to enable them to support life as long as possible. Every man, therefore, brought his bag on deck and dressed himself, and in the fine athletic forms which stood exposed before me, I did not see one muscle quiver, nor the slightest sign of alarm.'

And then, having done everything that human power could conceive in the fight against nature, Lyon called all hands aft, thanked them for their splendid behaviour, cautioned them that they would all soon appear before their Maker, and offered prayers for preservation. This climax was followed by a period of waiting, as they all sat down in little groups quietly expectant. Taking advantage of what little shelter from the breaking seas could be obtained, there was not one word of repining : they accepted with resignation what fate had handed them. Had *Griper* not been constructed with such strength, she would have broken up long before, but at 6 p.m. the rudder, which had already hit the ground severely, now broke up the after lockers.

On sounding the well it was a relief to find this stout hull had leaked no water, and it was a further encouragement that the hour of darkness coincided with the first of the flood

• tide. The ship ceased striking, and heavy rain now came down, which had the effect of taking the heart out of the gale, though the sea was still very bad. It was, however, a good sign when the wind shifted round to the north and came off the land as a light air ; and by 9 p.m. the tide had risen to five fathoms, so the crew were able to get snatches of well-earned rest. At 4 a.m., it being now September 2, the long monotonous work of weighing the anchors began. The best bower was found to have lost one of its flukes, but by 8 a.m. the others had been hoisted in undamaged.

As *Griper* made sail to clear out of this tight corner, the weather became calm, though there was a heavy ground swell setting into the shore, and from the beach to a mile seaward it was all white surf with not one single green patch. As Captain Lyon stood out on a westerly course, he named this anchorage the 'Bay of God's Mercy,' as an act of thanksgiving, and later in the day summoned all hands aft for a short service. On the way out to sea he sighted the buoy of the anchor which had been let go at 7 a.m. the previous day in ten fathoms. By good seamanship they were able to get the buoy-rope on board and thus weigh that starboard anchor, so only one anchor

had been lost. Altogether a very narrow escape.

After the longboat had been hoisted in, the sun broke through and disclosed the low-lying land. Captain Lyon was able to fix his position, and realised the mistake he had made in regard to Rowe's Welcome. That headland was not Cape Fullerton on the mainland (a little to the southward of Wager Bay); but, on the contrary, a point on the western side of Southampton Island. He now named the latter Cape Kendall, after his assistant surveyor. A few more miles were accomplished when they anchored again for the night, and the ship lay strangely restful, whilst all hands turned in to catch up with long-delayed sleep. But the untrustworthy compasses and incomplete cartographical data had nearly achieved disaster. The sun was clouded more times than otherwise, and observations could be made only rarely; yet the continuous heaving of the lead, which was the chief, and too often the only, warning of the approaching shore, was a great strain on the men.

CHAPTER VI

PERIL ON THE SEA

BUT *Griper's* narrow escapes were by no means ended. Captain Lyon was anxious to find some snug anchorage where he could water his ship and examine the damaged rudder. Now the gales were frequent and heavy ; the allowance of drinking-water had been cut down to a quart daily for each man ; the nights were very long and dark ; the area for manœuvring was so restricted as to cause anxiety, and no suitable indentation could be found along the coast. It became so frequent an occurrence for this wretched vessel to dip her nose right into heavy seas even up to the waist hammocks, that they were all now well accustomed to such incidents and scarcely regarded them. But at last, after the ship's company had been heaving the lead every hour in deep water, and every quarter of an hour in shoal water, for six days and nights, and being kept constantly wet in a temperature that was rarely above freezing-point, an anchorage was found between

Cape Fullerton and Whale Point on the American or western side, some distance below Wager Bay. That night Captain Lyon ordered them to splice the main brace and issued an extra pint of water. Such is the nature of the simple sailorman, with all his capacity for endurance, that, from the sound of singing and joviality which was heard 'tween decks, the ship might have been no further than a cruise round Plymouth Sound.

Fresh water was fetched from the shore, and the next few days were spent working north up Rowe's Welcome, guided always by casts of the lead which had made the men's hands so sore that canvas mittens were now worn. *Griper* was one of those ships which would have broken many a seaman's heart. Badly designed, roughly if strongly built, and with all that amount of stores aboard not too well trimmed, she belonged to the age when naval architecture had barely begun to be scientific. Nothing but first-class seamanship ever made up for the defects of those vessels themselves. To-day, with the most scientific designs and the highest grade of workmanship, we have reversed the conditions: we live in an age when mechanics are many, but real sailors are few. *Griper* had

at length reached not quite to the northern end of Rowe's Welcome, so she was again determined to show what a brute she could be. She refused to stand up under much sail, and (to quote Captain Lyon) 'at such a moment as this we had fresh cause to deplore the extreme dullness of the *Griper's* sailing, for although almost any other vessel would have worked off this lee shore, we made little or no progress on a wind, but remained actually pitching forecastle under, with scarcely steerage way, to preserve which I was ultimately obliged to keep her nearly two points off the wind.'

The heavy snow limited their range of vision, and when the soundings dropped rapidly from thirty and twenty to ten fathoms, the captain luffed her up into the wind and let go both bower anchors, with seventy fathoms of chain out on one, and eighty on the other. In accordance with the old naval custom, he then let go his sheet anchor under her foot, so that if she should start dragging the other anchors, this would do its work. And it is proof of the smart seamanship of those days that all this work, including also the furling of sails, striking lower yards and topmasts, was done under half an hour. Lyon had no

other alternative but to bring up, undesirable as it was. Had he stood on a little longer he would have struck the mainland. Where he anchored was assuredly in an exposed spot without any hope of shelter, the wind being now N.E., that is, blowing right down Rowe's Welcome. Any blue-water sailor will ask why ever didn't Captain Lyon wear his ship and run before this gale. But the answer is that owing to the absence of visibility it was impossible to know how close they were to the rocks ; and, secondly, *Griper*, with her deep draught, was very slow in bearing away. On many an occasion in strong gales it had taken a whole quarter of an hour before she could be persuaded to run before the wind.

This was the twelfth of September, and it remained now to see whether the anchors and cables would hold against the fierce, icy blasts that came tearing across from the Polar regions. As usual the ship began dipping bowsprit and fo'c's'le under, scooping up green seas solid, which soused all hands and poured below to the lower deck before hatches could be battened down. Simultaneously thick falling sleet covered the decks and froze with the spray. The tide at this time was setting against the wind, which made the ugly sea



‘HECLA’ AND ‘GRIPER’ (1820)



even worse ; and, in addition, of course, it knocked the *Griper* all over the place. Her people could feel her being strained, the bitts and windlass were groaning at the tension which the cables were asking them to bear, and it looked now as if there was to be a repetition of that awful night in the Bay of God's Mercy.

During the evening there came driving down from the top of Rowe's Welcome several streams of ice, with some quite big pieces ; and as the bowsprit crashed down in *Griper's* plunges the bobstays were now carried away by this ice. There was no fear of the ship's keel hitting the ground, for low water passed at midnight with eight and a half fathoms. But it was piercingly cold, the lower deck was awash, the men's hammocks all soaked, no rest possible, whilst she pitched so abominably that it was impossible to stand. On the main-deck it was worse, but life-lines had been stretched athwart ship, and by hanging on to these it was just possible to move about.

There was a foot of frozen snow on this deck, and the breaking sea froze on the men's clothes : but the twin anxieties were (a) would the cables hold till daylight ? (b) would the

bitts be torn right out of her? And before such points could be settled there loomed up the terrifying thought that, overpowered by some of those huge seas, *Griper* might just fill up and settle down to the bottom at her anchors. It was difficult through the hard darkness to see everything, but the drifting ice was quite alarming. Supposing one good obstinate berg jammed itself by the force of wind and tide at the bows, what then? Three results would quickly follow. The cables would be snapped, the bowsprit would be smashed, and thus the masts would have crashed. *Griper* would have become a total loss.

Coated with ice, and white as a bridal-cake; trembling at every blow from a wind that was now of hurricane force; savagely slapped by the heavy-handed waves; with not a glint of moon or star to illumine the gloom, and only a small horn lantern suspended from a stay to show up anything at all—the brig resembled the worst desolation. At the mainmast sat and shivered under a bit of tarpaulin the officer-of-the-watch, with his men wondering why they had not taken to farming instead of seafaring.

The night passed, and what looked like another of those hopeless dawns broke over them: for it revealed the unpleasing fact that

the best bower cable had parted. Furthermore, with the light came even a fiercer wind from the North Pole direct. Would the other anchors now hold? Impossible. Could the windlass and bitts endure much longer? It was a fifty-fifty race as to whether they would go just before the anchors. And, in spite of cut-away portions of the bulwarks to free the decks of water, one swooping sea could not be cleared before it was closely followed by another. At 6 a.m. the other two cables broke to the onslaught of two overwhelming waves. The worst had now happened, and nothing else could possibly more distress them than being driven ashore in the shrieking wind; but that would obviously be a matter of only a short time. Every officer and man realised that death was waiting for him round the corner, but there was the same disciplined tranquillity that had marked the first of September: not a syllable of panic, not a word of pessimism. Two officers just came aft and whispered to Captain Lyon: 'Cables all parted, sir!'

Meanwhile, instead of riding any longer head to wind, her bows were blown round and the ship lay right over on her broadside. This had happened at top of high water, and the wind

had backed through north to N.N.W. miraculously. This enabled *Griper* to pay off to the seaward or starboard side, whereas had she canted the other way she would have gone straight to the rocks just above the entrance to Wager Bay. She was now at least able to have sea-room and she was driving down Rowe's Welcome in daylight: two important conditions. Captain Lyon could set nothing better than a couple of trysails, and, even with the wind slightly on the starboard quarter, she laid her lee gunwale under water. The leadsmen had at once gone to their stations and lashed themselves securely, for on their data depended the difference between survival and disaster.

Within fifteen minutes they had seventeen fathoms, but Lyon had no idea as to the position where he had anchored, and he expected suddenly the land to loom up out of the thickness. At 8 a.m. the fore trysail gaff went crack like a carrot, but the flapping sail could not be lowered—partly because of the wild hurricane, but also because the ropes were thick with ice. And whilst all the crew were hungry for food, half-frozen, very wet, and equally fatigued, the crazy ship heeled over at such a steep angle that the men kept sliding off the iced deck into the gurgling scuppers.

Everything seemed wrong in the worst of all worlds, and then the wind increased to such fury that it hurled the two boats, which were in the waist, against the side of the ship and staved them in. At 11 a.m. one of these was filled by a wave and swept right away, davits and all.

At noon the coast of Southampton Island could be discerned indistinctly. But, having no satisfactory charts, nor reliable compass; having lost all bower anchors and chains; and being in a ship that would not beat off a lee-shore even in moderate weather, and was now at the mercy of a heavy gale in a strong tideway; and, further, all navigation even with the constant lead being rendered more dangerous because of the twelve-hour nights, there was nothing for it but to get south of the Cape Fullerton—Cape Kendall narrows and out of Rowe's Welcome with the utmost despatch. As long as the northerly wind continued and the leadsmen maintained their monotonous duties, there was still a chance; but a shift of wind to the southward would settle matters hopelessly. Even in this crisis, however, *Griper* seemed unnecessarily awkward. The sea so worried her short length that she declined part of the time to scud before the wind, so a

harassing night was spent in wearing her and making short tacks, with no knowledge as to the proximity of the rocks other than what the soundings afforded. The men had been without a hot meal or rest for two days, and their hands were now red raw. Several of the crew began to suffer from rheumatism.

By the morning of the 14th the N.W. wind had decreased to a fresh breeze, the weather was fine, it was slightly less cold, and after several hours' work ice was removed from decks as well as rigging. Lower yards and topmasts were swayed up, reefed courses and close-reefed topsails were set, but it was noticed that some damage had been caused aloft. The head of the foremast was badly wrung, and the bowsprit injured. That noon it had been possible to see the sun and get their latitude, and by steering S.W., but keeping about fifteen miles off, they sailed on the N.W. wind parallel with the American mainland. During the day they bent their hempen cable to their stream anchor, and bent the stream cable to a small 4-cwt. kedge anchor. Taken together, both were so light that they could be expected to hold the ship in a calm only. This meant that *Griper* would not be able to go back up the Welcome to Repulse

Bay : it definitely made it impossible for her people to attempt crossing the Melville Peninsula, which was the principal purpose of the expedition. Captain Lyon knew from the *Dobbs-California* expedition that in Wager Bay the tide ran eight or nine knots ; and, inasmuch as *Griper's* best speed under sail was six knots, and she had no anchors good enough to hold her in that current, that bay was entirely out of the question.

Lyon's immediate anxiety of late had been to get south of the narrows before another gale finished his ship, and he was lucky to have escaped. This done, what was to be the next plan ? His officers were asked their opinions in writing ; they all agreed that in consequence of the loss of anchors a return should be made to England without delay. This coincided with the captain's judgment, and, feeling conscious of having failed to carry out his mission, he began to execute that plan, keeping well to the southward till he was clear of Southampton Island. Although snow fell, the weather moderated, and fires below were already drying the men's clothes. The danger now was that it might be too late to get away before being hemmed in by the ice.

The compass-cards were having a merry

time on their own, running round through all the points and steady on none, but at night the ship steered by the moon or hove-to, being now well clear of the land at the southern end of Rowe's Welcome. It was a race against time, for there remained only about one navigable fortnight ; and the possibility of spending winter in the North was not pleasing. But the drinking-water had run pretty short, and amid those uncertain tides, without one reliable anchor on board, it would have been folly to have gone so close to the land as to enable a boat to reach a stream. By the ingenuity of the assistant surgeon a means of distilling was adopted, and thus each man received a quart daily. But how soon Hudson Strait would be reached no one dared to guess. The navigational difficulties were further increased by gales, and by several days of inability to get observations of the sun, and by thick falls of snow : in fact, there was hardly one inconvenience omitted. Additional to these sources of anxiety was the stark fact that *Griper* was becoming more and more unseaworthy. The heavy damage sustained in the Bay of God's Mercy, and on September 13, had impaired her strength. Each gale now made her decks leak worse, for her upper decks had been

seriously weakened. As she dipped her nose into the big seas she kept the lower deck and cabins constantly flooded: indeed, not for three weeks had that deck been dry.

At times this old ship would take four seas in the same moment—one over each bow and one over each quarter. Rheumatism became more general; the first lieutenant had to forsake his cabin and remove into the captain's because of the leaky streams. The stern-boat was swept over the side together with some provisions and instruments, and the ship herself was behaving like a wreck with the waves bursting over her as they wished. At last, on September 24, Cape Wolstenholme was sighted, after the ship had been able to average five knots over the ground (but assisted by a current whose speed was one and a half knots), and next morning ice was sighted. Only a few days' water remained to be consumed, so the surviving boats were sent to fetch some ice-blocks, which were thawed into three tons of drinking supplies: a quantity too small for the period which must elapse before reaching England. Fog now arrived to hinder them still more, and then came very large icebergs, of which one was taken on board and yielded a ton of valuable drinking-water. During

the night of October 2-3 the ship with a fair wind managed to get out of Hudson Strait into the Atlantic once more, and thus to cause intense happiness among officers and men. As to the captain, who through nine hundred miles of tricky navigation had been worried as few commanding officers have seldom been called upon to endure unrelenting responsibility, he greeted the open ocean with a unique pleasure: for the first time after five weeks he went below to enjoy a night of uninterrupted repose. And as the *Griper* went wallowing along with a moderate breeze he was to experience that pleasure which no man could take from him.

Another piece of ice was encountered next day and hauled aboard, so even the drinking problem was considerably eased. The bonny north-west wind kept the sails steadily filled; the October weather even seemed quite mild after their Arctic experiences. Little groups of men on deck were discussing the three short weeks that would bring them home, and plans were being made as to how they would celebrate their arrival. Wives and families and homes seemed now almost within tangible distance, and generally the spirits of the ship's company rose even more rapidly than the temperature.

But nature had not done with them yet : there was to be no rapid transition. On October 4 there set in a heavy gale—one of those undisguised winter Atlantic blows—which came up from the southward and never abated for several days. But there arrived with it thick weather, which made it impossible to look out for bergs : so once again there was continuous suspense day and night, and the expectation that the ship would end her days as, in our own epoch, the liner *Titanic* finished her short career. This mighty breeze went on for a whole fortnight, accompanied by a heavy ocean swell. It is one thing to regard this kind of weather from an electrically heated, luxurious cabin of a modern liner sixty feet above the water-line : but it is a grave matter to consider those heartless seas from the groaning deck of a 180-ton sailing vessel that has been battered into weakness. It was still doubtful whether *Griper* would be able to weather her way into port. And amid this trial there came a summons for help.

At this period of history there was a good deal of whaling done by those plucky little vessels which used to sail out of the north-east British ports. Many of their voyages were highly speculative, and sometimes they

would return from the neighbourhood of Greenland with not so much as would pay the wages of the crews. They were tough, hard-working fellows whose share of bad weather was remarkable, and the food had a way of running out all too quickly. But they had a speed superior to the likes of *Griper* and made better weather of the huge seas. Now, after little more than a week of this hard gale, *Griper* sighted a vessel which bore down: the first ship that had been seen by the brig for many a lonely week. She turned out to be the whaler *Phoenix*, belonging to Whitby, and announced her exceeding need of bread.

Perhaps it seems that to beg food of a ship which has just come out of the icy North was rather like asking alms of a pauper; but charity which begins at home does not end at sea, and Captain Lyon promised to do his best. The wind and waves determined to thwart this resolution if possible. There are times when even the least imaginative sailor feels that in the presence of vast, undulating, watery masses his own faith becomes frozen and his courage vanishes into a void. The sight of green hills rushing into valleys, and the valleys rising into threatening mountains, is appalling and nerve-bursting. The whole contest of ships

and mortal men against such an unholy alliance of wind and waves seems unequal and unfair. In himself is the will to keep going, to refrain from yielding, but for all that the hard, pitiless ocean is determined to win a cruel victory. He is stunned by all that his sense of seeing and hearing can convey to his feelings, and however much he triumphs over himself he can never beat the sea except by some stratagem that dodges direct physical force. So, when the brig hoped to lower a boat and send off supplies, the wild weather forbade it utterly: the open craft would have been smashed to tiny pieces and the men drowned as soon as the boat's keel kissed the sea. All night brig and whaler remained together, hoping for some little respite in the morning, but there came no improvement in the conditions whatsoever. And then the time-honoured bit of seamanship was tried that had to be done even by steamships during the Great War when a mine-sweeper in a fresh breeze found it difficult to pass a line to her sister by heaving. A barrel would be dropped at the end of a line across the other's bows and hauled aboard till the wire sweep came up.

Much more difficult was it to carry out this bit of seamanship in the days of sail. But

hungry men will do wonderful things even in the worst Atlantic tempests. *Phoenix* got ready a cask and veered it out at the end of a good line. *Griper* was then manœuvred till the cask was picked up, the line being of that good strength which was necessary when a harpooned whale went off at the rate of knots towing a boat full of men for mile upon mile. Captain Lyon's men, having filled this cask with bread, did the same thing with two of the brig's casks, and into one of them placed letters which should reach England before the naval vessel. *Phoenix* now hauled the three casks on board, and bore away on the opposite tack : for once the almighty elements of a gale had been outwitted.

Even when the wind eased up a little and the men were allowed to come up from the suffocating atmosphere of the ill-ventilated brig, it was to make manifest several unpleasant items. The sick list was steadily mounting, the lower deck was still constantly awash, some articles had been swept overboard, one boat had been stove in, and the foretopmast was decidedly groggy. But the most tantalising and most perpetual fear was that *Griper* might be swamped into destruction : the repeated manner in which she ducked into the great seas,

instead of rising over them, made her people wonder if she could ever live across the Atlantic. They were bound home not by the North Sea, but south about up the English Channel.

On October 19 the wind had moderated slightly, but it had come northerly, which meant that it was, at any rate, fair. Another whaler, *Achilles* of Dundee, was spoken, and her master reported that they had killed but two ; some of the fleet had not killed even one, though the *Phoenix* had gone home with fifteen whales. The *Achilles*' skipper said that for the past month the weather had been the worst in those seas that he had experienced in thirty-four years, and that another whaler, the *Dundee*, was in the greatest distress for provisions, since (like so many other unsuccessful vessels) she had been hoping against hope and thus remained out long beyond her time. Captain Lyon promised to keep a good look-out for her, but she was never spoken by him. On October 23 there came a gale from E.N.E., which did more damage and faded right away on the 24th to a flat calm, but leaving behind the same high sea. This is the kind of circumstance which tests the gear of sailing-ships no less than the tempers of their crews. *Griper* rolled and slatted and pitched and rose, with her yards swaying
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and her sheets suddenly becoming taut as if to snap with the jerk. Bows went down and the foredeck came up dripping, taffrail seesawed in the same aggravating style, and then followed a most violent squall which allowed her to show only her trysails.

On October 30 snapped the foretopmast at last, but the wreckage was soon cleared up, and on the afternoon of November 7 the leadsman got soundings in seventy fathoms. A day later Land's End showed up just east of north, two hours later came the welcome sight of the Lizard lights, and the jolly north-west wind sent *Griper* bowling along up the English Channel : for, in truth, at last the girls had got hold of the tow-rope, and then came the craggy Start, with flat-topped Berry Head and the cliffs of Devon. Portland lights were passed in the dark hours, but off St. Alban's, Captain Lyon hove-to for daylight so as to carry on through the Needles with the morning flood stream. Cowes sped by, and it was important to reach Spithead before the tide turned, as *Griper's* captain had no wish to be boxing about such a restricted waterway all night. He saved his tide into Portsmouth, aided by a fresh breeze on November 10, made his number entering, signalled his loss of all anchors and

cables, and then—as if to make things difficult right to the very last minute of the trying voyage—there came a heavy squall. But they ran before it through the narrow entrance, and secured to a three-decker's moorings.

Thus six eventful months ended. Many of the crew were in a state of exhaustion, but only three were immediately sent to hospital, and they soon recovered. It was a credit to Captain Lyon's leadership and good organisation that, in spite of all which had been endured, they had been brought home alive. To his keen disappointment, the attempt to reach Repulse Bay had quite failed, but he had brought back interesting data regarding the magnetic error under which his compasses suffered in high latitudes, and had added to botanical knowledge. *Griper* had been a happy ship, and there had never been a complaint or a punishment during the whole time. Amid all the inconveniences, the trials and dangers, there had been perfect discipline, with every officer and man pulling his weight for the common good : and it is for that reason that this expedition is a model of what can be done. Luck, good and bad, played its part ; but pluck and dogged determination, combined with first-class seamanship, turned potential disaster into escape

on more than one occasion. 'I may with truth assert,' wrote Captain Lyon, 'that there never was a happier little community than that assembled on board the *Griper*. Each succeeding day, and each escape from difficulties, seemed to bind us more strongly together.'

Happy the crew that can go ashore with those words in their ears !

CHAPTER VII

DEEP SEA DRAMA

THE interest and importance of any locality rise and fall under the changing influences of contemporary history : one series of events is able to endow a place or region with even romantic characteristics, but only for a limited period. Some new invention, some fresh development, some far-reaching change in the habits of mankind may entirely alter all local value.

No better example could be found of this than in the fluctuating career of that island St. Helena, which is so intimately connected with the story of sea transport. Lying in strange loneliness in the Atlantic south of the equator and too far west of the African coast to claim the right of being neighbour, it would almost seem as if nature had intended it to be an emergency convenience always ready to do its special part in particular periods of the world's development, but possessing no consecutive and consistent progress.

Discovered by the Portuguese in 1501, that is to say just when sailing-vessels were beginning to prove their ability to make long ocean voyages and therefore great geographical discoveries, it became of prime importance as a milestone and stopping-place on the long route from India. Placed right in the track of the south-east trade winds, with Ascension Island eight hundred miles to the north-west, St. Helena had a relative value just because the sea-lane to the Far East was necessarily round the Cape of Good Hope. Ships found that St. Helena was convenient for obtaining fresh drinking-water, and for repairing damaged rigging or spars. Not surprisingly, then, did this volcanic island fall into the hands of the British East India Company just a hundred and fifty years after its first discovery. Thereafter, in times of war, when the convoy system was essential to the safety of valuable sailing-ships owned by that rich corporation, St. Helena developed into a notable rendezvous, and whole fleets of bluff, high-sterned, three-masters would congregate here for mutual protection before proceeding through the danger zone.

At the close of the French wars Napoleon, as everyone remembers, lived here a prisoner from 1815 till his death in 1821. But, with

this temporary attraction for the world's notice gone, the island still continued as a welcome halt for the sailing-ships coming home from India and China: and (having examined many private and other documents of that age) I have been struck by the number of occasions on which these ships put in principally because of mutiny. Crews, ill-used by bullying skippers beyond all human endurance, would bring their discontented vessels here to anchor and demand justice for themselves as well as punishment for the captains. Commanding officers of whalers, cargo ships, and others would arrive here with blood-stained decks, and half the ship's company under arrest after some terrible scenes of violence on the high seas. And often enough it was only by the smallest margin that such voyages did not end in a general massacre: the steady fair wind towards the island after rounding the Cape was the sole sustenance of depressed spirits. Right must triumph over brutal might, and at St. Helena judge and jury would deal out justice impartially.

Thus it was that, though the island was hundreds of leagues from anywhere, and covering not more than some forty-seven square miles, it occupied during the sailing-ship era

a position in the sailor's mentality not less high than its own precipitous cliffs. But the opening of the Suez Canal, the triumph of the steamship, and the change of route to the Orient gave back to St. Helena its original solitude. Only once during this present twentieth century has it again come into prominence, and those of us old enough to recollect the South African War will not have forgotten that here was a repetition of history when in 1901 to 1902 prisoners were again exiled on this lonely spot. Not even during the Great War of 1914 to 1918 did this British colony come into prominence. No German overseas submarine got quite so far south, no raider appeared off that coast ; and the Battle of the Falklands had definitely prevented any possibility of von Spee's squadron from capturing what might have been a useful base for operating across the tracks of liners bound from South Africa to England. Whether in the near future St. Helena may have a fresh import for long distance flying-boats is a matter that does not here concern us.

Now, during the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century naval operations were being carried on off the West African coast for the suppression of that iniquitous

slave trade which for a time was such a blot on civilisation. The exploits of those little British brigs and schooners against similarly rigged Spanish slavers form some of the most exciting incidents at sea during an otherwise rather dull period that had followed on Anglo-French and Anglo-American peace. And St. Helena, being situated even distantly off the coast of activity, could not remain wholly unaffected ; for news kept coming in through warships concerning fierce fights and narrow escapes, and some of these yarns make extraordinarily good reading.

One of these was told by the people of H.M. Brig-of-War *Cygnet*. On the fifth of April, 1845, she was cruising off St. Paul de Loanda, that hot, moist African port which lies nearly fourteen hundred miles to the north-east of St. Helena. When about thirty miles off the low, sandy land, *Cygnet* sighted a curious object which at first seemed to be a canoe, but as the brig got nearer it became clear that this was no craft at all. Keen eyes soon decided that it was a raft, and that there were seven men ; but, after the sailing-ship got alongside and the men were taken aboard, it was quite evident that this sudden meeting was barely in time. For these

unfortunate mariners were found to be a naval party consisting of Lieut. Wilson, R.N., and six ratings, who were already in the last stage of exhaustion. Their story was eventually unravelled, and it is one of those dramas of the sea which require no addition to quicken our sympathy.

Wilson and his men belonged to H.M.S. *Star*, which had been patrolling the West African coast and during the month of March had captured a slave-ship. These seven English seafarers had been put aboard as prize crew and were bringing her to port, making quite a quick passage, when on March 16 there came a treacherous white squall. The slaver was caught aback, and capsized all of a sudden about three o'clock in the afternoon. Unfortunately this vessel had no boat, and she herself could not be righted. So, with the utmost difficulty, Wilson's men succeeded in making a raft by lashing together the main boom, the fore-yard, and eleven other spars. On these they laid the main hatch-cover, as well as some pieces of the sails. The prize was still afloat, and they remained throughout the night alongside her in the hope of picking up plenty of provisions and possibly some drinking-water.

But the ship gradually sank, and left them with only one cask of salt pork and a few gills of rum. A raft is at all times an impossible makeshift, but they rigged a bit of mast and set some sail in the hope of making the nearest point of Africa, two hundred miles away. On this day, besides the seven mentioned, there were also two other naval ratings, together with the slaver's captain, and thus was begun a voyage of terrible endurance. The raft obviously could not be kept under control, though the squaresail enabled her to make a certain amount of headway. There were no nautical instruments, the only guides being the sun by day, the stars by night, and a rough idea of the wind's direction. Thus twenty trying days lingered out, during which the raft was thrown hither and thither by the Atlantic waves and the wretched survivors were being washed fore and aft.

Food and rum ran out, and then followed the bitter anguish of hunger and thirst under a merciless sun. Fortunately they caught three sharks and a few dozen flying-fish—the latter being taken by hand whilst playing among the spars. But so great was the men's thirst that, in spite of their want, they were unable to swallow more than part of the fish.

Not having been able to bring with them one drop of drinking-water from the wreck, and having finished the rum, they spent the first nine days with only a mouthful of water to each man, served on two occasions : nor would this have been possible except for the lucky arrival of a slight shower. They would all have succumbed presently, but now the rain came down more determinedly and they were able to catch some of it in the empty rum-cask.

There are few situations more tense than that of being surrounded by sea, yet dying of thirst ; and always there comes an awful temptation to drink of the salt water, with the inevitable result of madness. I remember during the Great War talking to one of my friends, a naval officer who had just come ashore with his arm in a sling. His ship had been torpedoed and sunk, he himself had been wounded and was hauled out of the sea by some of his men on to a Carley raft, such as every man-of-war carried at that time. The afternoon sped on, they were all crowded and cold, very hungry and extremely thirsty. My friend, realising what was likely to happen, threatened that if any man attempted to drink the sea-water this man should be pushed off the raft to fend for himself. It was a drastic

enforcement of discipline, but it was just and proper. The result was that when by chance a patrol vessel picked them up at dusk, no man had yielded to the fatal inducement.

Now Lieut. Wilson also did his best under similar circumstances, though it is never quite easy to keep up morale when the ship has gone and men's throats are parched like leather. He retained control over the water in the rum-cask, served out to each man thrice a day a ration from the heel of this officer's shoe, and so kept them just alive. But the former captain of the slaver, and two of the naval seamen, could not endure their still unsatisfied thirst. They persisted in drinking of the Atlantic; they went out of their minds and died in delirium. Some of the company thought that in the case of the slaver skipper this end was suitable to his deserts; for, previous to having been captured by the *Star*, he had been taken also by H.M. Brig *Wasp*. But he had succeeded in recapturing his vessel from the latter's prize crew and had murdered the whole lot.

Whenever there was the least wind and sea, these seven survivors could have no rest, for the waves rushed over the raft and she was like a half-tide rock. To prevent themselves being

drowned they had thus to keep standing upright ; and this came as a further trial to their already debilitated bodies. When occasionally they ventured to sit or lie down, the water would even then be up to their middles. The heat of the tropical sun combining with the salt water lacerated their feet, ankles, and legs in a dreadful manner, and they were almost at the end of their endurance when on the nineteenth day they sighted the far-away land in the neighbourhood of St. Paul de Loanda. They had travelled on that crazy raft 400 miles by the time *Cygnets* picked them up, but they were now in good hands, and presently regained their strength.

The operations against the West African slavers were in every way creditable to the British nation both as to the way in which these undertakings were carried out, and from the high motive which inspired them. There was no desire for aggrandisement of empire, or to free British colonies from enemies. On the other hand, seeing how guilty had been some of our Elizabethan ancestors in trafficking slaves across the Atlantic from Africa to the West Indies, we were to some extent making reparation for errors of the past. The chief area for this slave trade during the early days



CAPTURE OF A SPANISH SLAVER BY H.M.S. 'BUZZARD'



of Queen Victoria was off the Guinea coast, and the establishment of small cruising vessels of the British Navy under the command of keen, fearless officers did much to harass this barbarous occupation. It must always be a matter for regret that Spain, which had done so much in the progress of shipping, navigation, and exploration, should now own the most powerfully armed of all these Guinea slavers. Such craft were often enough manned with a picked crew that included some of the most desperate English and American sailors who ever handled a rope. Frequently, too, they were commanded by captains of wide experience and desperate courage, who would either get their human cargoes safely across to the West Indies or die in the attempt. Five hundred unhappy negroes fastened down below hatches, with scarce room to move in an odorous atmosphere, soon gained more space by the frequent deaths of their fellow wretches; others would perish suddenly when shells came in through the wooden hulls, during some engagement with the warships.

There would be periods of success and failure. In one year not five hundred slaves would be exported, thanks to the cruisers' vigilance; and in another as many as fifteen thousand

would reach the West Indies. But it was at Gallinas that the dealers had their headquarters and general clearing-house, where they kept their human merchandise in buildings ready to be shipped. Thus it was that the mouth of the Gallinas River was always a position which required to be watched carefully for emerging craft. During the earlier part of the year 1845, H.M.S. *Growler*, one of the early steam warships, had proceeded to Gallinas but sent off her pinnace to cruise about the coast on the look-out for suspicious vessels.

In command of this pinnace was *Growler's* first lieutenant, whose name was Lodwick. After a while he fell in with a felucca, which promptly hove-to, but this was merely a trap into which Lieut. Lodwick straightway fell. The latter believed that she was about to surrender, but when the pinnace was within thirty yards it was observed, too late, that the felucca was dotted with muskets fore and aft. Lodwick, taking in the situation, at once cheered his men to row hard up to her before she could discharge her hail of shot. The enemy, however, used the cheer as a signal to open a murderous fire. Fortunately the aim was too high, though Lodwick's hat was shot through the rim. He returned the attack,

but the felucca's aim was so improved in the second volley that Lodwick was struck on the left knee and thigh, two of his men were severely wounded, and another couple shot dead, but six oars were also shot away.

The pinnacle, now denuded of so many men, and robbed of so much propulsive power, had to retire, and stood in towards Gallinas, where she was picked up by *Growler*, who found her riddled with shot. The felucca's crew of seventy had many killed and wounded, but she got right away. This fast-sailing craft led a charmed life. Commanded by an Englishman, with a crew of English, French, and Americans who were all able but infamous characters, she had four months previously been chased by every cruiser on the West African coast, yet every time she escaped. On one occasion she had the misfortune to carry away her rudder whilst going over the bar and had to go all the way back to Havannah; but at last destiny was waiting for her.

During this same year, 1845, H.M. Steam Sloop *Hydra* (Commander Young, R.N.) captured her, and found she bore evident marks of the stiff attack which had been made by Lodwick's pinnacle; for the mizzen was thoroughly riddled, the mainsail cut to ribbons,

and altogether the slaver had been through a warm time. About this date, also, *Hydra* sighted another notorious felucca of the same trade, and named *Pepita*. There was a thrilling chase during the darkness of night, in which the enemy made strenuous efforts to sail off. *Hydra's* 68-pound guns made such excellent marksmanship that the felucca's canvas received considerable damage, her speed was accordingly lessened, and there was shattering injury done to hull as well as bulwarks. Still the slaver carried on pluckily, and it was only *Hydra's* steam-engines which enabled the sloop to come up with her at last. When an officer was sent aboard, he found the *Pepita* had 300 slaves, and that she was ready for a bloody fight. Over her quarter was a long 18-pounder loaded with grape and round shot, a cask full of cartridges close by, several swivel guns loaded with one-pound balls, four chests of arms, all muskets and pistols double-loaded—some with ball and others with slugs—the deck strewn with grape and round shot, and about 200 rounds in her magazine.

Service in sailing-ships off the West African coast in those days afforded plenty of excitement, but gales of wind sometimes rather complicated matters when a prize crew was put

aboard a captured slaver. We have seen what happened to Lieut. Lodwick, who had to rely solely on oars. For his work that day he was promoted, but afterwards died. Consequent on Lodwick's promotion, a Mr. Wasey of H.M.S. *Alert* (Commander Bosanquet) was appointed acting lieutenant on that station. Now it chanced that *Alert*, whilst still off the African coast, captured a slave-vessel owned in Brazil, though she was flying no colours and was apparently without a name. There were, however, seventy or eighty slaves on board, and she was bound across the Atlantic. Commander Bosanquet put Lieut. Wasey and a prize crew in charge, with orders to proceed to Sierra Leone for adjudication. But the south-east trades made their own decision. Such heavy weather was encountered that Wasey had to run the ship on and on till he reached Maranham on the coast of Brazil.

This was achieved only with the utmost difficulty, for frequently he had seven feet of water in the hold, fresh leaks kept breaking out, and all hands had to bale or work the pumps. Having arrived at Maranham, the British Consul certainly rendered every assistance, and Wasey set about to try and obtain the Government's help to afford proper protection for the

slaves. But whilst this naval officer was ashore with the President, discussing the matter, there came down to the ship about fifty armed men in the uniform of the National Guard, who announced that they had been instructed to take slaves and crew to a safe place ashore for the night. Seeing that the vessel was now so uninhabitable that the water was already washing about over the decks, this might have seemed good news. But the naval ratings quite properly replied that they refused to leave their ship in the absence of their commanding officer. The slaves, however, together with the slaver's late captain and crew, landed.

The sequel would have been amusing if it had not been so annoying ; for when Wasey presently came back and found that all the slaves and all the prisoners were missing, he insisted on knowing the reason quickly. And it was little satisfaction when he discovered that the visitors were not the National Guard, but a party of brigands disguised as Brazilian soldiers, who had marched the negroes off up country for their own use. The Brazilian officials made some sort of attempt to recover the lost prisoners and slaves ; but Lieut. Wasey having realised that he was not likely to

receive efficient assistance, finally embarked his men aboard a merchantman that brought them all to Liverpool. He then went up to London, reported at the Admiralty, and related his adventures. Whilst he had in part failed to carry out his instructions, he deserved and received great credit for having brought the slave-ship with her cargo safely through real heavy weather. Day and night they had been compelled to bale, and the vessel barely kept afloat in the South American harbour. But that which made matters even more trying was an ever-impending outbreak on the part of the slaves allied with the slaver captain; so the captors kept their arms by their sides ready.

Another aspect of sea life is still preserved for us in the records that remain on the island of St. Helena, and the cases of harsh—even brutal—treatment are so frequent that it would be impossible to deny belief in the men's stories. On the other hand, it is but fair to remember that if the sailing-ship officers were bullies, they had the difficult task of dealing with 'hard-case' and often lawless hands who resented all discipline. Scarcely had the vessel cleared the English Channel than trouble began, and there would be blows exchanged. The following instance, belonging to this same year 1845, is

illustrative of the cases which were brought before His Excellency the Governor of St. Helena.

On the twenty-fourth of July the British schooner *Blomidon* reached the island from Plymouth, and a few days later William Price, who was the schooner's cook and steward, brought the following charges against John Uran, the schooner's master. 'If I did not have the brasswork cleaned of a morning,' complained Price, 'the Captain used to flog me. If there was a little dust on the plates at breakfast, he used also to flog me for that.' Although the man had been shipped as cook-steward and therefore should not have been expected to keep a watch, Uran made him serve also as a deck-hand, flogging him again whenever he failed to be on watch by night. About three weeks short of St. Helena the crisis came when Price had been on duty two nights and a day, and then went below. The captain was on deck, standing abaft the stern boat, and called Price up.

This order was obeyed ; the man was just putting on his coat, when Uran commanded him to take it off. No sooner had the cook done so than the captain aimed a musket and fired, hitting the man in the right side. Fortunately

the ammunition consisted not of lead, but of hard peas, which, however, made such painful wounds that the man groaned in his agony. A quarter of an hour went by, and then Uran had the humanity to summon Price into the cabin and picked one of the peas out of the poor fellow's breast.

The complaint was supported by the evidence of a seaman, John Hannah, who had relieved the wheel at 8 p.m., about an hour before the incident occurred. The deck was in darkness, all the other hands were in the fo'c's'le, and only the mate was with the captain when the report of the gun was heard. Hannah testified that he had often seen the cook flogged with a hand-saw, which cause the man's back to be covered with blood. Sometimes this took place at the windlass ; at other times Price was flogged at the mainmast, lashed to a cask. Daniel Sorre, another of the schooner's seamen, swore on oath that one evening, when the weary cook was falling asleep, the captain discharged a blunderbuss by his head to wake him. And a resident of the island had himself seen the mate, whilst the schooner was at anchor in the roads, strike him with a piece of hard wood. So Price was able to bring a charge against the mate also, whose name was Robert Uran, a relative of the

skipper. 'The Captain sent me down below to pick some potatoes,' the cook accused, 'and I fell asleep. The Mate then came down, struck me across the head, and knocked me senseless ; after that he struck me across the arm. I was all over blood, but the Mate took me on deck, washed my wounds, rubbed them with balsam, though he afterwards seized me up in the rigging and tied me there.'

Both Daniel Sorre and John Hannah were able to add details. The former swore that Price had fallen asleep over picking the potatoes and after being struck had returned to the deck with his head cut open. Although the captain was now compelled to excuse the cook from duty, Price was kept below with no other food but one pound of bread and two quarts of water as a daily ration. The pangs of hunger evidently overpowered the cook, for about two days later it was ascertained that a bag containing bread was missing. The captain accordingly punished Price by chaining him round the waist and padlocking him on deck every night from 8 p.m. till daylight, until the *Blomidon* came to anchor off St. Helena.

Hannah admitted that sometimes the cook deserved a little of what ill-usage he got, though he had seen the mate lash him to the

boat-davit at the main-rigging and flog him with the bight of the gaff topsail down-haul. On one occasion he was lashed from 12 till 8 p.m., with his arms extended by a scrubbing brush and a hand-spike down his back, and a snatch-block hooked on behind. In this discomfort the cook was made to walk up and down the deck. It was true enough that Price was not a satisfactory worker, but he was little more than a lad, and the St. Helena surgeon who was called upon to examine the cook's body found at least one of the injuries to be serious, for the left arm had a damaged bone, and there was evidence enough of the flogging.

The result was that on August 27 the two Urans had to appear at St. Helena before the 'Court of Commissioners for the trial of offences committed on the High Seas.' The Court consisted of the Chief Justice of the island; of Captain John M'Dougall, R.N., commanding officer of H.M. Steam Vessel *Vulture*, which happened then to be in the roads; also Lieut.-Colonel Fraser, member of the Legislative Council; and Mr. R. C. Pennell, the island's Colonial Secretary. Both the prosecution and defence were represented by counsel, and there was a jury. At this trial it was shown in evidence that very soon

after the *Blomidon* had sailed from Plymouth on May 17 the cook had been subjected to severe and cruel treatment, though the act charged in the indictment took place about three weeks before reaching St. Helena roads. John Uran was accused of shooting at the prosecutor with a gun loaded with gunpowder and split peas, and Robert Uran was charged with aiding and abetting.

Such was the dread which captain and mate had inspired on board that not one of the crew had dared to remonstrate with these two perpetrators, or even to express sympathy at the time with the victim. No witnesses were called for the defence, and the jury, after deliberating for more than an hour, found both prisoners guilty of an assault. The Chief Justice, addressing the two Urans, then observed that the jury had taken a merciful view in not finding them guilty for shooting 'with intent to do him some grievous bodily harm'; for this would have meant transportation for the term of their natural life. John Uran was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment, and Robert Uran for nine months, in Her Majesty's gaol at St. Helena. Thus was justice finally meted out.

But, lest this should be thought some chance

and isolated case of a somewhat dull and stupid sea-cook causing trouble, let us call attention to the next instance which occurred about the same date. In consequence of information being given to the St. Helena authorities that a man had died from ill-treatment and severe beating aboard the British barque *Stirling*, which happened to be in the roads, an examination took place before the local magistrates, who deemed it a case suitable for investigation by the Court which was then sitting for the trial of the two *Urans*. A warrant was accordingly issued for the arrest of Captain Oliver May, and William Scott, master and chief officer respectively, of *Stirling*. They were sent for trial, and appeared before the Court on September 3, 1845. Scott was indicted for the manslaughter of Thomas Eaves on July 15 last 'upon the High Seas,' and May charged with aiding and abetting. Both pleaded not guilty.

Briefly, the facts were that on July 15 the *Stirling* was on her voyage from Calcutta. At eight o'clock that morning Thomas Eaves, a seaman, relieved the man at the wheel, and Scott took charge of the deck, whilst the second mate went below to breakfast. Of course there are few offences aboard a sailing ship so

irritating to an officer as bad helmsmanship : in the unwritten records of sail there are occasions innumerable where a careless steersman has incurred the immediate wrath of the officer-of-the-watch and been rightly punished for his negligence. Perhaps there is scarcely a sea officer to-day who has not at some time in his career been compelled to dismiss a man from the wheel and put someone else in his place. On the other hand, we all know that it takes a few minutes for a man just coming on deck to ' feel ' the ship in her stride, and especially is this true when she is under canvas : for just a brief spell he may not meet her quickly enough with the helm as she luffs up into the wind, or he may bear away too much. If he is an able sailor he will not make this same mistake twice, but he will hardly be able even then to avoid the officer's extreme displeasure. The sad feature is that the more able the seaman, the more sensitive is the latter of his own momentary failing. To be dismissed the wheel is the keenest insult to his professional pride. Still, helmsmen are born and not made, like true horsemen.

Now Eaves had barely taken over at the wheel than he negligently let the *Stirling* luff into the wind, whereupon Scott lost his temper

and tried to push Eaves away. This action not surprisingly angered the steersman, who refused to leave the wheel. Obviously he should never have disobeyed orders, but it is only fair to remind ourselves that discipline aboard the old sailing ships among crews of casuals, picked up wherever they could be found, was almost exclusively a matter of brute strength and threats. On this morning chief officer and steersman were in a resentful mood, epithets were exchanged, mutual respect vanished, a scuffle ensued, blows were struck by each. The result was that Eaves soon found himself knocked down on to the deck. But Scott in his passion so far forgot himself as to continue beating the man, till the fellow cried out : ' You'll kill me.'

Two of the crew therefore interfered, and asked the chief officer not to take the man's life away, but Scott promptly hurried below and returned with a pair of handcuffs in his right hand. There was murder in his wild, impassioned mind : he was not more restrained than a wild hurricane which uproots houses and sends ships to perdition. Eaves had just picked himself up and was ambling from the poop to go for'ard, when Scott's right hand struck him on the back of the head with the

iron handcuffs, so that the seaman was felled to the deck once more. And again Scott brutally attacked him whilst the stunned fellow was down, continuing to rain blows from the left hand as well. This might have gone on for some time, but a second member of the crew, who had already been sent to the wheel, came forth and hauled Scott away from the victim. It was at this stage that Captain May himself came up from below, ordered the new helmsman back to the wheel, and then seized Eaves by the throat. The ship's carpenter, named Lewis, realising that only the previous day the captain had been taken ill with a fit, asked him to let Eaves go: he even begged him not to remain on deck. But the suggestion was ignored.

May renewed his attack, severely scratched Eaves's throat, and an unseemly struggle went on, till the much battered seaman fell from the poop on to a water-cask that lay in its customary position. By this time he was in considerable pain, and with great difficulty managed to raise himself to his feet. He limped forward along the deck, followed by Scott, still carrying the handcuffs, went below and flopped into his hammock. The chief officer now ordered him back to his work,

and gave him ten minutes. Eaves hesitated, but after a while obeyed and carried on. This was not to be for long, however. The pains in his head, around his temple, and in his throat became unbearable, he went sick and became delirious. A bruise on the right side of the head, above the right ear, a severe contusion over the left temple, a dent in the fore part of his head, all done by the chief officer, and the captain's rough usage at the throat, had now produced a cumulative effect.

Under the captain's direction his shipmates applied some simple remedies, and Eaves appeared to be getting better, but within a few hours he relapsed into unconsciousness, from which he never recovered. Eleven days after the infliction of his injuries he was dead.

At the trial counsel for the defence made a strong point of the fact that when the blows were first struck *Stirling* was under a heavy press of sail, with a strong breeze on the quarter, that ship and cargo and crew's lives were endangered by Eaves's bad steering as well as his insubordinate conduct. The point also was stressed that the great responsibility incurred by the captain's ill state of health placed on Scott's shoulders such a duty that he was justified in acting with promptitude

when he removed the man from the wheel. There was something in this argument, though it would be impossible to claim that Scott's subsequent violent conduct had the slightest justification. The same colonial surgeon who appeared in the *Blomidon* trial now gave his opinion that the man's death was brought about by the injuries to the head, and the jury, after two hours' deliberation, returned their verdict. Captain May was found not guilty, but William Scott was found guilty, with a recommendation for mercy on account of the provocation received. He was therefore sentenced by the Court to eighteen months' imprisonment in St. Helena gaol.

Such examples as these could be multiplied readily. If we should wonder why it was that sailing-ships could still obtain crews, the answer is that poverty as well as the love of adventure sent men afloat every time. The standard of education even for master mariners was not high during that first half of the nineteenth century, and the standard of living accepted for seamen was very different from that prevailing to-day in merchant vessels. It would perhaps be a fair representation of facts if we were to say that the anxieties imposed by that merciless mistress, the sea,

were the cause of human beings being unable to tolerate each other's existence in the same ship for long. We have to bear in mind the heavy work and long-drawn-out suspense of taking a ship from India to Europe at a period when canvas was not yet driven from the trade routes. Day after day, night after night, this was enough to try the endurance of master and chief officer, till their tempers snapped, and ill-fed, badly paid sailors had thought over their grievances so long that they could see no right mode of procedure save mutiny.

But it was not always that the men rebelled against their captain and officers merely at the bidding of one from their own fo'c's'le. On rare occasions the rough, illiterate officers themselves inspired disloyalty to the ship's master, and we shall see now the fate of a captain fighting his lonely battle against the very men who should have supported him in such a crisis.

CHAPTER VIII

MUTINY AND HURRICANE

ONE Saturday in the autumn of 1845 the schooner *Ariel* sailed from Amoy, the well-known China port at the mouth of the Lung-kiang River, bound for Hong-Kong. The crew consisted of Manila men, the master being Captain Macfarlane, the mate being a young and promising fellow named Wilkinson. There was also another officer who was gunner.

At six o'clock that same evening *Ariel* was off Chapel Island, and, after getting a fix by cross-bearings, Captain Macfarlane gave Wilkinson the course, which was to be S.W. Not being in good health just then, and requiring to be on deck during the greater part of the night, Macfarlane now went below for a preliminary rest. *Ariel* was quite a serious consideration for any conscientious skipper, seeing that she was carrying as cargo about £20,800 in specie. At half-past eight the peacefulness of his cabin was assailed by the voice of the chief officer.

‘Captain Macfarlane,’ came the shout, ‘you’re wanted on deck.’

No shipmaster ever delayed when that kind of summons called, so he quickly tumbled out and hurried into the night air. No sooner had he done so than the companion was closed behind him by the mate and gunner, each of whom was armed with a brace of pistols. The surprise was as alarming as it was dramatic, for they now informed Macfarlane it was their wish, together with the intention of the crew, that he should take the schooner to Singapore; for which reason they had altered course from S.W. to south.

With amazing impertinence these two officers invited their captain to join them in a piratical cruise, assuring him that *Ariel’s* excellent sailing qualities would ensure her freedom from capture, and Macfarlane was ‘offered’ a large share of the specie on board. Needless to say, the schooner’s commanding officer refused to have anything to do with such a disgraceful scheme, whereupon they ordered his butler to fetch all arms from the cabin. At this time Macfarlane’s life was in grave danger; they continued their efforts to persuade him to join with them, but he tried to instil some sense into their stupid minds. Did they realise

the heinousness of their crime? Did they appreciate the fearful penalty which they would certainly incur? And then he tackled them in another way. If—he promised—they should now give up this idiotic intention, they should be forgiven. But such appeals were useless: the two were obdurate and firmly resolved to carry out their villainy.

The mate, who was by nature a thorough criminal, said that he had originally planned to shoot Macfarlane whilst the latter was asleep in his cabin, and had gone so far as to point a pistol down through the skylight, yet finally could not bring himself to commit such a cowardly attack on an unconscious man. But history has plenty of such examples where the intending murderer has been lacking in perseverance. And now Wilkinson promised that he would save the captain's life, though warned him that any attempt at rescuing the schooner would mean certain death. Apart from these three officers and one lad, there were no Europeans on board, and Wilkinson insisted that the Manila crew were all on the side for piracy.

After some further conversation, the two mutineers undertook to land Macfarlane and spare the lives of his attendants, though it

would be necessary to kill some of the ship's company. Macfarlane was to be kept at present a prisoner, and to be put down into the hold ; so at 10 p.m. the main hatch was removed. Somehow this skipper still succeeded in exercising his influence at every critical decision, and he now requested that the prison should be his cabin. For a while the two culprits hesitated, but finally consented ; so he was put down below, though not before he had made one more appeal to their common sense. When he endeavoured to dissuade them from their folly, they replied that they had made up their minds long ago, and had been waiting only the favourable opportunity. Other men in Hong-Kong, they mentioned, had also been considering the *Ariel's* capture, and there was a European already close at hand in a lorch with a crew of forty about to carry out this piracy. Failing success, then there was another coterie in Hong-Kong who were bent on capturing *Ariel*, together with the clipper *Celestial*.

The situation for Captain Macfarlane did not seem particularly hopeful, but he never lost heart, and he continued to be no small annoyance, just as during the Great War many an Allied officer who had been taken prisoner

by the enemy maintained an incessant petty teasing of the Germans who guarded him. Thus one morning at daylight Macfarlane forced open the door of his cabin, went on deck, and found the ship running before a fine north-easter. He also took a glance at the compass, and discovered that the schooner was heading about S.W. by W. No strong resentment appears to have been made through this temporary freedom, and at 8 a.m. breakfast was brought to him in his cabin. Two hours later he sent for the mate, and requested that he might be allowed the ship's longboat, or at least that he might be put aboard some junk ; but a firm refusal was given. The mate went so far as to admit that the captain would in that case reach Hong-Kong too soon for their own convenience.

Wilkinson seems to have been not merely thick-headed, but lacking in that firm, unflinching purpose which is essential to anyone who expects success as a pirate or in any other kind of criminal career. For presently he consented that the captain should be put aboard a junk at nightfall, and, furthermore, all his personal property should be restored to him. It was just noon when the mate again entered the cabin, told Macfarlane to make

himself comfortable till the vessel should reach Singapore, and threatened that if another ship should come in pursuit the whole of the treasure would be thrown overboard. At the same time he renewed the assurance that Macfarlane's life should be spared.

Now during that same afternoon the captain's Chinese servant, who had been allowed some freedom, came and informed Macfarlane that it was not true the Manila crew were in the plot: on the contrary, they were contemplating rising against the mate and gunner to restore the schooner to her proper command. By ten o'clock that night they had matured their plans and acted promptly. They had no arms of any kind save their own knives and the rammers of their guns; but with these they fell on the mutineers and simultaneously enabled the captain to reach the deck through a window, when they presented him with the cook's axe to arm himself. The fight was now quickly at its height, and as quickly finished. The mate was knocked down by a rammer and cut about with knives; the gunner fled below, took refuge in the cabin, but raised the hatch which covered the magazine, and threatened to blow up the ship.

This possibility was promptly negatived by

the crew, who seized a rope, made a lasso, and threw it over the gunner's head so neatly that the man was hauled up on deck and secured. Thus, by a sudden turn of fortune, both mutineers were accounted for and the danger passed. The mate died of his wounds, the gunner was taken in the ship to Hong-Kong where he was tried and condemned; but on the way thither Captain Macfarlane mustered his Manila crew and held a service of thanksgiving on deck for deliverance from danger.

The whole inspiration for this mutiny aboard *Ariel* was cupidity, rather than dissatisfaction with the conditions of sea service. When English sailors rebelled at sea it was usually because they had some genuine grievance; and one of the prime causes of discontent was because they had been sent on board—perhaps in a state of intoxication—by those land-sharks who had previously taken to themselves a month's advance pay which the men had still to earn. Sailormen are notoriously bad at bargaining over business matters, and in the hands of unscrupulous boarding-house keepers they were the merest children. Consequently there was every element of trouble when a crew began the voyage with the knowledge that the first few weeks would be to them

unremunerative. A sarcastic remark from one of the mates, a week of heavy weather, the monotony of bad food abominably cooked, an act of injustice meted out by the captain, the fiery words of some hardened sea-lawyer in the fo'c's'le, and an emotional appeal to end matters might eventually bring about a full mutiny with bloodshed. There is no surer way to trouble aboard ship than to allow men to have genuine reasons for complaint.

Now, fortunately the British Government in 1845 did something to remedy a grave scandal that had been allowed to exist too long. An Act was passed for the protection of seamen entering aboard merchant ships, and it was ordered that from the first of September no person should hire, engage, or provide seamen for merchant vessels except with a licence; and a penalty was to be enforced against persons soliciting sailors to become lodgers in houses of unlicensed persons. A provision was also included in the Act to prevent sailors being charged a larger sum than was due, as also to prevent the detention of their money or effects.

All this was essential, since the seafaring man required to be protected against himself and those crafty rascals who imposed on his

good-natured foolishness. But no amount of legislation could ever prevent his ship from getting into bad weather. Nowadays we have been so educated to rely on the excellence of the shipbuilders, the skill of engineering, the high standard of navigation and general steamship efficiency, that no one takes a voyage from India very seriously. But late in the first part of the nineteenth century the dangers were still very real.

So long as ocean travel was carried on under sail, just so long was the ship at the complete mercy of any gale that might come along. To-day, with high-powered machinery and immense hulls, this tyranny of the weather is restricted, though not banished. We have yielded up romance and uncertainty in favour of definite dependability, so that the homeward bound steamer is able to make her landfall at the scheduled hour and to enter dock on the tide selected months previously. Gales or calms, battering or leaving her undamaged, make little difference. At the back of the shipmaster's mind there is more fear of some individual sitting in a Liverpool or London office than there is of nature's wild outbursts. But less than a century ago the shipmaster experienced the true meaning of that expression

‘ the freedom of the seas,’ for he was conceded a more complete dominion, which was limited only by stress of weather. His own judgment was given a fuller expression ; he could drive his ship or snug her down as seemed best to him ; and he was able, also, to exercise a sterner discipline over both passengers and crew. But when the time did come for the utmost employment of all his skill and all his experience, then the occasion was no ordinary day’s work : it was one of the great crises in his life.

Such an opportunity was afforded at the end of March 1846 for the captain of the sailing ship *Maria Somes*. This vessel was a transport which left Ceylon on March 12, having on board 318 men of the 90th Regiment. All went well until March 25, when it blew a strong gale, with heavy squalls, rain, and vivid lightning. On the following day the weather became worse, the squalls were terrific ; the *Maria Somes* laboured heavily, and had to heave-to under close-reefed mizzen topsail and mizzen trysail : before the day was over the gale had reached hurricane force, the rain and lightning were amazingly strong, and the whole environment was alarming. Sails were split like tissue-paper, but a tarpaulin was hoisted in the mizzen-rigging and the ship was kept afloat by constant pumping.

On the 27th the weather seemed somewhat to have improved, yet the barometer remained as low as 28.50. On the next day the gale piped up again, and the ship was once more hove-to with her head to the S.S.W., the wind being from the west, though veering to the north. Matters looked ugly enough, but the experienced skipper had everything made as secure as possible on board in readiness for any emergency. And then came the big moment.

At three that afternoon, when the gale attained terrific strength, *Maria Somes* was thrown on her beam ends, and a tremendous sea drove right over her. Certainly there was every appearance now of final disaster, but the wonderful feature was that the vessel righted herself as soon as the squall passed. She then began to ride out the gale quite pluckily until the wind's force was redoubled, but she was being treated so harshly that two futtock-shrouds¹ of the main topmast rigging carried away in the heavy roll. A great sea struck the ship as the main topmast snapped off about five feet above the cap, dragging over with it the fore and mizzen topmasts, together with the jib-boom and the topsail-yards. Shortly afterwards

¹ The futtock-shrouds are short iron shrouds leading from a band which is near the top of a lower mast, and form ladders for the sailors to climb up.

the main-top capsized. This top was a kind of platform to which the topmast shrouds were extended, so as to form a greater angle with the mast, and thereby afford additional support to the latter.

An attempt was made to clear up the mess, but this was impossible as the chain topsail tye—a sort of runner (sometimes of thick rope) employed to transmit the effort of a tackle to the yard—and the sheets were both fast about the main-top. An officer who made the attempt was knocked down and much hurt. The carpenter tried to cut the chain, but failed owing to the violent rolling of the ship. However, during the night this tangled wreckage was torn away by the wind. On the 29th the gale once more reached hurricane force, and during the morning the seas hammered so fiercely that the gallery on the port quarter was carried away as well as the after deadlights. Mattresses, hammocks, and battens were used to stop up the openings, but on sounding the hold it was found that there were five feet of water below.

Every effort was made to get rid of this, but the weather kept driving the men away from the pumps. The gale in its dreadful fury kept shifting from N.W. to N., and then back to

west. During this time the troops, kept below in the hold, were almost suffocated for want of air, and needed drinking-water to quench their thirst. It became thus necessary to open the after hatch, but a party of men had to stand by with a tarpaulin over it lest the seas should rush below. So enormous was the wind that about daylight a gig was blown up into the mizzen rigging and eventually over the side, with spare spars, oars, and so on. A huge wave bursting on deck swept away binnacle, hen-coops, ladders, provisions, casks, and smashed the boat which belonged to the port quarter.

The ship was now going from bad to worse, and the mizzen topmast crashed through the poop-deck into the cuddy during one heavy weather roll. Amid all the noise and horror of the gale it was impossible to do anything for those on the lower decks, some of whom were dying of suffocation and had been without food or water. Another disaster arrived at 3 p.m., when the starboard quarter gallery and part of a cabin were washed clean away, the sea making a clean breach through the cuddy, where the ladies and their men-folk were assembled in expectancy of their last moments. One hour later the fore-top capsized. The fore-yard,

having been carried away, came down on to fo'c's'le deck and rails, tearing them up badly until it could be secured by the captain and a few hands. The lee bulwarks and the guns had disappeared into the ocean, and altogether the ship presented an amazing spectacle.

During the ensuing night the gale once more moderated, pumping went on, but frequently the troops employed on that duty were washed away, faint with hunger. Next it was found that the mainmast and rigging were so badly straining the hull that the mast had to be cut away. Hatches were at length opened, and then one sergeant, six men, one woman, and five children were discovered dead from suffocation. It became thus requisite to allow many of the soldiers on deck, where their condition was but little better, seeing they had no shelter whatsoever. In the cuddy, or great cabin, under the poop, the officers' families were scarcely better situated, for they were all crowded together in a deplorable state of trepidation and complete exhaustion after so prolonged suspense.

It needed now only one thing to make matters worse, and that one thing happened when the ship showed that she could not answer her helm. An examination revealed the miserable fact

that the rudder-head was wrung off. Captain, carpenter, and a party of four men set to work repairing it, but their efforts were not more than partially successful. Next day the weather, instead of improving, became more violent, with a heavy, rolling sea that made terrific fun of the transport. Those who were still strong enough manned the pumps and kept them going ; otherwise the *Maria Somes* would have foundered in a short time. There still remained the longboat, but now a mighty wave broke her loose, and as she was full of water there was no stopping her : she just went, and took with her some spars lashed down to big ring-bolts, tearing the bolts out of the deck bodily.

In this case the boat did not disappear over the side, but became a horrible menace, driving about the deck like a wild whale. The captain and chief officer were already disabled, so could not attend to this matter, but the second mate took charge. He with the aid of others made strenuous exertions to secure boat and spars. Eventually the spars were lashed and controlled, but the boat was shattered to pieces, and four soldiers had both legs as well as thighs broken. Another man had previously broken his leg just above the instep when assisting the

captain to clear the deck of lumber; and several severe accidents during the day made the list of casualties quite lengthy.

But even so long-drawn-out a tragedy must have an ending. The barometer had been as low as 28.20, a most abnormal mark. Gradually the gale subsided, and the glass rose to 29.30 with the restoration of fine weather, and a fresh hope was born. The ship was now jury-rigged, the rudder had been washed away, but a jury-rudder was fixed up, and it was possible to get the *Maria Somes* into some sort of order. An observation was taken with the sextant, and the worked-out position was judged to be 1,250 miles E. by N. of Port Louis, the capital of Mauritius. It was therefore decided to make for that harbour, where she duly arrived after eighteen more days. The passage was extremely slow, for the reason that her main-mast and other spars had long since gone: but it is a credit to her people that a vessel so crippled and limping should ever have reached land again.

Such dramas of the sea during the last decades of the sailing-ship's existence were less infrequent than many people suppose, but the records which remain are comparatively few and have to be quarried out from most

unlikely places. It is well that, in an age which derides its grandfathers and makes such easy fun out of the Early Victorians, we should appreciate something of the fears and horror with which our ancestors went to sea on their lawful occasions. The modern bored passenger who lounges in the luxury of cocktail bars, dines in the most luxurious of saloons, has his sports arranged for him by a special attendant, and generally is made so happy and comfortable as almost to forget he is afloat, might well look back on those days before the Suez Canal was opened and the ocean-going steamship was not yet more than an interesting experiment. The element of uncertainty had still to be reckoned with, and an excellent appointment to some lucrative duty in India was not undertaken with the same light-heartedness that sees the voyage east begun to-day. Within a hundred years the whole nature of sea transport, after many centuries of practical stagnation, has been revolutionised so quickly that we have not time to think and appraise; so that even the air journey to the Orient is now begun with less nervousness and uncertainty than was the sea voyage round the Cape of Good Hope.

It was not less bad for the little brigs which

used to fetch cargoes and nosed their way into distant ports, where tramp steamers would some day enter confidently. One April during this Early Victorian epoch the brig *Iona* of Aberdeen had loaded up in Mauritius with a cargo of sugar, which is so plentiful on that island. She set forth bound for London, but soon got caught in similar weather to that which hit *Maria Somes*. The lightning on this occasion was very dangerous and tore out both of *Iona's* masts, as well as her bowsprit : that is to say there was as much damage done as if a steamer's engines were smashed up or her propellers lost. In addition to this, the brig was thrown on her beam ends, with the broken masts alongside trying to knock holes through her hull.

Captain Peter Rolls, her skipper, did all that could be done for her. He set his crew to work cutting away the rigging, and thus freed her of the battering jagged spars, but still she refused to right herself. Finally it became necessary to throw overboard about 600 bags of sugar before she would come up. This was not easily done, for all the while the sea was making a clean breach over her as if pouring over some sandy bar : the men could not keep on their feet, and the *Iona* was also rolling

atrociously. It was a further misfortune that the pumps had been smashed by the lightning.

This was her condition, fourteen days out from Mauritius, when off the south-east African coast she was discovered by the Dutch ship *Nassau* of Amsterdam, commanded by Captain J. J. Duintjer, who arrived not an hour too soon. With a true sense of sea brotherhood, he stood by her, rendered every possible assistance, was the means of saving vessel, cargo, and lives. He provided the brig with spars, sails, rope, and whatever else was required. For two whole days he remained there hove-to, nor did he leave her until *Iona* had rigged up her jury-masts and was able to carry on with safety. Before the reconditioning was complete there arrived on the scene the British sailing-ship *Marlborough* of London. There was little left for her to do, but she supplied a couple of acceptable spars, one coil of rope, and then sailed on. *Iona* continued her voyage, and next met with the Dutch barque *Clara Anna Maria* of Dordrecht, who also proffered assistance, but Captain Rolls replied that, as the brig was not leaking, he was not in need of help. And eventually *Iona* arrived safely in Capetown, where a letter was written to

her Aberdeen owner, Mr. Alexander Mitchell, expressing gratitude to Captain Duintjer.

One of the most interesting and curious vessels that ever sailed from the East was the Chinese junk *Keying*, which left China (Canton) on December 6, 1846, reached St. Helena on April 17, 1847, and eventually arrived in the Thames, where she caused considerable attention. Now *Keying* had great tophamper, little draught, her masts being of immense size and weight and made of iron-wood. Off Mauritius she encountered extremely heavy weather on March 22 and 23 ; yet she suffered no damage, proved herself a most beautiful sea boat with easy motion, and neither shipped a drop of water nor leaked. This good fortune might seem extraordinary and incredible, but I have before me the notes made at the time by a British master mariner. We have to remember that the rudder, which was supported by three large ropes, weighed nearly eight tons, and when down drew twenty-three feet. It could be hauled up like a centreboard till the craft drew only thirteen feet.

In heavy weather she sometimes needed twenty men to steer her, though, running before the wind in fine weather, she was so steady that two men were all that were required, and

they scarcely had to touch the tiller. Built in fifteen compartments, several of which were watertight, *Keying* had a raised quarter-deck, two poops, and raised forecastle; yet for all that she was extraordinarily buoyant. Moreover, she could rapidly snug down in a blow, for the sails reefed themselves. All that was necessary was to have one man to slack away at each halyard, though the mainsail weighed nearly nine tons and took nearly two hours to hoist. But that such a vessel should be able to come through unscathed, where handier and not less well-found ships and brigs hit disaster, is one of those sea chances which history delights in recording.

CHAPTER IX

ST. HELENA AND THE SLAVERS

FREEDOM from absolute control is an instinct inherent in man, and some of the greatest crises in history, both political and economic, religious and domestic, have been brought about by the determination to attain liberty. One has only to think for a moment and instantly there come to the mind such examples as the Renaissance, the Reformation, the American Independence, the Feminist movement, the rise of Socialism. Each of these was inspired by the desire for a less restrained sphere of action, and the tendency through many centuries has been in the direction of democracy, whereby one human creature is given at least rights and opportunities equal to those of any other human.

In accordance with this leaning for liberty, it was but natural that eventually the civilised world should interest itself in the problem of slavery. Whilst in the early civilisations slavery was a recognised and

accepted feature, as, for instance, when the Jews were slaves in Babylonia or Egypt; whilst, too, the Greek slaves had their condition blatantly tattooed on the forehead, and we think of the Roman galley slaves' treatment as we think of some horrible nightmare; yet, notwithstanding all the power of Christianity, it was a very long time before slavery showed any sign of passing away. The sixteenth-century Spaniards, for example, treated their slaves with scant respect rather than endeavoured to set them free. Whether in the West Indies ashore, or in their Mediterranean oared galleys, such men of bondage endured lives more miserable than death. Even Venice knew no better sympathy with these downcast, though it realised that volunteers always made better oarsmen than slaves.

The English Hawkins who traded slaves from West Africa in 1562, and the planters of Virginia during the next two centuries who purchased negroes, were but following wicked precedents. By the eighteenth century negro slavery had reached its height; in 1834 all slaves throughout the British Empire were emancipated, the practice was abolished by France in 1848, and by the Netherlands in 1863. Not till the 'sixties did this reform

come to the United States ; Russian serfdom was done away with in 1861, and, late in time, even Brazil condemned slavery from the year 1888. England, with its strongly marked national sense of liberty, began the anti-slavery movement towards the end of the eighteenth century, and this inspired the necessary legislation which began gradually in 1792 for the abolition of all slave trade ; but it was not till the Emancipation Act of 1833 that the bondage was definitely destroyed in British colonies.

Now, partly as the victorious result of Trafalgar and Waterloo ; partly because of an increasing wealth brought about by her rapidly extending merchant ships, as well as the growth of the iron and coal trades ; there spread over the English mind a kind of smug self-satisfaction and insular independence, which, nevertheless, was not wholly narrow. Whilst there was a national belief that no other country could possibly be in the right so long as she differed from British standards, yet there was also a kind of maternal sense of responsibility exercised, half-pityingly but half-patronisingly, over the rest of the world. The anti-slavery gesture was basically as British as the belief in the Navy's invincibility. Consequently few

operations could ever be so popular among totally different people, that included the prosperous London merchant, the labourer, the manufacturer, the seaman, the farmer, and the dear old ladies who lived in an atmosphere of evangelical piety. Philanthropy in those early nineteenth-century days was a word that conjured up no little feeling of contentment : and overseas philanthropy exercised a kind of romantic glamour in the minds of those responsible for this energy.

And yet, whilst there was a kind of hypocritical delight in teaching the ignorant foreigner the evil of his ways, as some elderly school dame would punish a child, yet it seemed to be forgotten that during the first seven years of the nineteenth century British ships had themselves carried annually across the Atlantic 40,000 African slaves, of whom fifty per cent. perished either at sea or soon after landing. Slavery, too, existed no further away than Scotland down to the very end of the eighteenth century, the salters and colliers being bought and sold with the works where they laboured. Even as late as 1744 the wicked system of kidnapping children for deportation to the North American colonies as slaves continued in Aberdeen.

Still, in spite of everything, it will always be to the credit of British enterprise and justice that her Navy was partially employed, for year after year between 1830 and 1860, off the West African coast against the elusive and well-armed slave-ships of various types.

By reason of its geographical position in relation to the West African coast, the island of St. Helena thus gained a gradually increasing importance during those years when the slave traffic was being suppressed. Not merely were the captured ships brought into this roadstead, but, as we shall see, the culprits themselves were here brought before the Court of Commissioners for trial. The origin of this Court for the trial of offences committed on the high seas is not without interest. Previous to an Act of Parliament passed in the twenty-eighth year of Henry VIII's reign for the punishment of 'pirates and robbers of the seas,' all such offences were proceeded against before the Lord High Admiral, according to the rules of the civil law.

That mode of trial, however, was deemed inconsistent with the liberties of the subject; and, since no man's life could be taken away without the judgment of his peers, a new jurisdiction was established by a statute of

Henry VIII, whereby all persons accused of felonies, murders, or robberies committed on the high seas should be tried by a jury of twelve men, according to the course of common law, and punished in the same manner as if such offences had been done on land. Under this statute a commission was directed to certain people therein named for trial of such offences.

The advantages of this commission were afterwards extended to the British colonies, so as to obviate the inconvenience of bringing prisoners and witnesses from distant parts. During the reign of George III an Act of Parliament was passed, by which the like powers and authorities were given to certain commissioners to inquire, try, and determine in any of the nation's islands, plantations, and colonies, offences committed on the high seas. Thus it was that from time to time the St. Helena Court of Commissioners was kept busy trying delinquents other than those accused of mutiny.

One of the most intriguing trials was that which began on June 24, 1846, the prisoners being the surviving crews of the two Brazilian slave-ships *Gaio* and *Galgo*, who were arraigned for having resisted the boats of H.M.S. *Wasp*



ROLLERS AT ST. HELENA



and for wounding several men on that occasion. The case was of unusual interest because there were in the dock thirteen men of the first ship and twenty-one from the second, a total of thirty-four, though several of the other slavers had been killed in the affray. There was, however, a curious legal difficulty; for, whilst the Court had power to adjudicate upon Brazilian vessels and the cargo of such vessels engaged in the slave trade, yet the Court had no authority with regard to the persons found on board; nor were foreigners amenable to the Court for any act committed in a country or place not subject to the dominion of Great Britain.

The thirteen survivors of *Gaio* were tried first, all of whom rejoiced in such names as Jose Liuz Leitano, Nicholas Francisco Fernandes, Jose Ignacio Oliveiro. They pleaded not guilty and were legally represented, an interpreter being sworn and directed to explain the proceedings. The Queen's Advocate opened the case for the prosecution and briefly related the circumstances. He began by reminding the jury that considerable exertions had been attempted by Great Britain to abolish the slave trade, and referred to the treaties which had been made with nearly

thirty independent States, including that between Britain and Brazil. A strong naval force was constantly employed on the African coast for the purpose of searching and detaining vessels engaged in slaving, and H.M.S. *Wasp* was one of these patrol craft. On April 5 she discovered a suspicious-looking vessel, which turned out to be the Brazilian schooner *Gaio* and was presently captured. She was found to be equipped for the slave trade, sent to St. Helena for adjudication, and there condemned in the Vice-Admiralty Court. The prisoners at the bar were found aboard *Gaio*, and the evidence would admit no reasonable doubt of their active participation in the attack on *Wasp's* boats.

The prosecution stressed the point that *Wasp's* commander was fully authorised in sending his boats to ascertain the character of the schooner, and the attack on these naval craft was consequently a resistance of lawful authority, wanton and unprovoked. Counsel trusted that the jury would not lose sight of what was due to 'that gallant Service, devoted, at the expense of life and health, to the arduous duty of suppressing the foulest blot that ever disgraced humanity, denounced by assembled statesmen as the "desolation of Africa, the

degradation of Europe, and the afflicting scourge of humanity.” ’

The first witness called was Mr. John Halliday Cave, midshipman in H.M.S. *Wasp*, who testified that on the fifth of April he was ordered by Captain Ussher to take charge of the whale-boat, chase and examine the *Gaio*, but was to be under the orders of Lieut. Hockin, who was in the gig of a schooner that had just hove in sight off Ambrizette. The time was about 7.30 a.m., and the chase lasted the whole day. A little after sunset Cave observed the *Gaio* firing musketry at the gig, which was a couple of miles ahead of the whale-boat, and a loud report from a gun was also heard. The gig returned the fire, and then there was a lull for a while, during which Cave's boat came up with the gig.

Hockin and Cave now divided their ammunition between themselves, and, whilst the former pulled ahead to the slaver's port bow, Hockin made to board her on the starboard bow, colours being hoisted in both gig and whaler. Scarcely had the boats got within range than the schooner again opened fire with muskets, causing three men to be wounded—Austin Elson, of the whale-boat, receiving a musket-ball in his thigh, whilst Edward Campbell of

the gig had a ball go right through his leg. The firing continued till the boats got alongside, when the sailors leapt aboard. Cave noticed that all the crew had now rushed below to hide, with the exception of one man, who began running to the hatchway, but was cut down. On going aft a small 3- or 4-pounder was discovered, but apparently it had recently burst, and then there was handed up from below the slaver's captain, minus one of his legs. Jose Ignacio Oliveiro remarked that this injury had been caused through the gun's bursting.

Lying about the deck was ammunition of all sorts—muskets, boarding-pikes, cutlasses. A Brazilian ensign was found below, and the ship was adequately fitted for carrying slaves. It was now quite dark ; a blue light was burnt as a signal to *Wasp*, the Brazilian prisoners were put into the whale-boat and towed astern, and about 1 a.m. they were taken aboard Captain Ussher's ship. Cave was then ordered to bring the prize to St. Helena.

Next in the witness-box stood up Edward Campbell, one of the gig's crew who had been wounded. It was he, who, seeing the one man on deck jumping about from port to starboard, presumed that the Brazilian was about

to attack. Campbell, in spite of his own bad leg, hit the man on the neck with a sword. That had no effect, so he ran the fellow through and then hurled him overboard. Austin Elson was the next witness, and produced the lead musket-ball which had been cut out of his thigh. Another witness, William Norman, who was wounded in the back of his head, corroborated the evidence, and finally the prisoners' counsel, after producing no witnesses, put forward the plea that the Brazilians neither had seen the colours hoisted nor had been aware—until the moment of boarding—that the boats were manned by British sailors. But the Chief Justice summed up, the jury retired, and after an hour's deliberation a verdict of guilty was delivered against all thirteen prisoners. The Court was then adjourned till the next day.

On June 25 the Court sat for the trial of the twenty-one members of *Galgo's* crew, who pleaded not guilty likewise. The prosecution produced Lieut. David Elliot as witness, and from his evidence it appeared that at daylight on April 20 H.M.S. *Wasp* sighted to the north-west a suspicious-looking brig. Captain Ussher immediately ordered away three of his boats—viz. the pinnace, gig, and

cutter, to chase and examine the stranger. Lieut. Hockin was this time in charge of the pinnace, Lieut. Elliot in the gig, and Midshipman Burnley in the cutter. Ensigns were hoisted in the boats, *Wasp* following with her colours flying too. Aboard the enemy brig no flag was flying. A stiff chase ended after four hours, when the pinnace, with the gig, got within range and fired a gun across the brig's bows to make her show her colours or heave-to. This shot was immediately replied to by two guns, and there ensued a pause till the cutter could join up. Meanwhile the brig took in some of her sails and maintained a continuous fire on the boats.

Now, as soon as all three boats were together, Hockin gave orders for boarding, which was done under heavy fire, whilst the boarders gave way to tremendous cheering. Two of the boats were considerably injured, the masts and sails of the pinnace being thoroughly riddled. Midshipman Burnley and six of his men were wounded, two of the latter having been shot through the breast. But there was no denying the naval men, who forthwith took possession of the brig, though resistance was continued by some firing from the tops. This annoyance was ended by shooting the men

there placed, and then began an examination of the vessel.

Both a Brazilian and a Spanish ensign were found aboard this *Galgo*, but her nationality was in accordance with the former. She had a crew of thirty-six, she was well armed and abundantly supplied with ammunition. Completely fitted up for the slave trade, with ventilation in the deck consisting of iron gratings, iron bars across the hatches, and a slave deck laid in readiness for her intended cargo, she had sufficient rice and water for a thousand negroes. Nothing was wanting.

It was obvious from the testimony of several witnesses that *Galgo* had made every preparation for a desperate resistance, with the boarding-pikes all greased on the points and for a couple of feet up the staff. Midshipman Burnley and a man named Thomas Brown had received their wounds whilst in the act of boarding, another man was wounded after getting on board and again whilst below; yet another man, named Cooper, on going below was seized by the throat and thrown down by one of *Galgo's* crew, who was instantly shot dead. The prisoners were rounded up, put in the pinnace, taken aboard *Wasp*, and duly brought to St. Helena. A letter was

found aboard *Galgo* advising her to keep off the land, in order to avoid the English cruisers.

On the conclusion of the prosecution the Court was adjourned till next day, but the jury were directed to be kept together. On June 26 the prisoners' counsel argued that the Court had no jurisdiction, as the prisoners were Brazilian subjects aboard a Brazilian vessel, which at the time of the alleged offence had not been converted to a slaver; and that English Acts of Parliament could not apply to Brazilian subjects on what was in effect Brazilian ground. He then read a document containing a statement prepared by three of the prisoners stating that they were passengers who took no part in the resistance, that some of *Galgo's* crew began firing without her captain's orders, whereupon the passengers and the rest of the crew went below. Thirteen of the brig's crew were killed, and another wounded Brazilian afterwards died in hospital at St. Helena. These fourteen were the party who had defended the ship.

The defence was that the prisoners had taken no part in the resistance to the naval boats, and that those who had resisted were all killed. The prosecution replied and maintained that the statements of the prisoners

had not been substantiated, and then the Chief Justice summed up. His Honour proceeded to tell the jury that if the prisoners were guilty of any offence in resisting the visit and search by *Wasp's* boats, this offence being created by an Act of British legislature could apply only to British subjects. Therefore, if the jury should be satisfied that the offence was committed in a foreign ship by foreigners, they ought to find a verdict of acquittal.

The jury retired for a short time, and brought in a verdict of not guilty. And then the prisoners from *Gaio*, who had already been found guilty, were now brought up for judgment. The Chief Justice informed them that the Court was satisfied they really were Brazilian subjects, so he sentenced them to a nominal punishment of twenty-four hours, which meant that they, too, regained their freedom.

No one reading the above cases can entertain the slightest doubt that these Brazilian ships, admittedly equipped for the slave trade, and hovering about till the coast was sufficiently clear of cruisers to allow them to run in and load up, were there for one purpose only. Technicalities of the law and nice points did not assist those officers and men whose duty

it was to spend weeks and months in this difficult work of stamping out a great scandal. Service under equatorial conditions, with occasional trips up unhealthy west coast rivers, with many disappointments as a reward and fruitless efforts at success, tried all concerned more than a little. But still the vigilance was unrelaxed, and the persistent way in which such vessels as the Brazilian brigantines *Telina* and *Rolla*, and the Brazilian felucca, *Saron*, were captured and condemned gave encouragement on the one hand, whilst proving to the enemy that this horrible trade could not continue indefinitely.

The *Saron* arrived off St. Helena in April 1847, with two other prizes convoyed by H.M. Steam Frigate *Penelope*, flying the broad pendant of Commodore Sir Charles Hotham, K.C.B., who was at that time the senior officer of the West African squadron. *Saron* had been captured on March 18. The second of the three was a schooner of 52 tons, name and nation unknown, but containing 317 slaves; she had been caught on March 30. The third was a Brazilian schooner *Joanito*, captured on April 4. They were all condemned, as was the Brazilian schooner *Jupiter*, captured by H.M. Sloop *Flying Fish* on

March 30. But a felucca captured by the same cruiser on April 17 was run ashore by her slave-trading crew.

Such repeated and continuous blows, together with the burning of shore buildings, had a great, though not a permanent, effect. It was clear enough that the final knock-out had not been given, and that this abominable traffic in human lives would be carried on in the best ships available. Thus, for example, as early as September 1845 a steamer of 290 tons was being employed off the African coast in this trade. Fortunately she was captured by H.M.S. *Penelope* (also a steamer). The slaver was intended for the carrying of 1,500 negroes, and had a crew of Portuguese, Spaniards, and four American engineers. She had been fitted out in New York, and her 40-horse-power engine, which was similar to that in use on the railways, was placed on deck, the paddle-wheels being capable of being worked independently. Several other similar vessels were believed to be fitting out for the same business. Just before her capture she had declined to receive 1,000 slaves which were at Cabenda ready for embarkation, and she was now waiting till the balance of 500 arrived to complete her full cargo before sailing

across the Atlantic. She was well armed with one 12-pounder, and every sort of small arms.

St. Helena during the late eighteen-forties was never surprised when it saw two or three prizes coming on. Some cruisers were unusually successful. H.M.S. *Star* within a fortnight captured three brigs fully equipped, bringing her total during one commission up to fourteen prizes. In September 1845 H.M.S. *Cygnets*, previously mentioned, was lying at anchor at the mouth of the Congo when she sighted another vessel coming down the river. The stranger then let go anchor, so *Cygnets* got under way and made sail to close her, whereupon the stranger made sail also and stood up the river. The chase continued for some time until the stranger, finding she was being overtaken, gave up the contest. Her crew set her on fire, ran her ashore, and escaped. *Cygnets* despatched a boat to extinguish the flames, but it was impossible to board her, and she was burned to the water's edge. She was afterwards found to be of nearly 400 tons burthen, and was obviously one of the slavers.

During January 1846 there were no fewer than 15 condemned slave-ships in St. Helena

roadstead, two of which were full of negroes and were prizes to *Cygnets*; one being a 100-ton Brazilian schooner which was captured with 547 slaves, whilst the other had 542 slaves and had been caught about five hundred miles to the north-east of St. Helena. So matters went on, with many captures, but with no real headway. The difficulty was that the Brazilian and Portuguese slave-dealers were protected and supplied by the native chiefs ashore, who were not easily tackled by a naval force. Apart from the navigational difficulties, there was the fact that the strongholds were well armed with heavy guns and muskets. In order to make an example of some notorious slave-dealer chief, advantage was taken of a suitable opportunity in December 1851, when a chief named Kosoko usurped the rule of a district that belonged by right to Akitoye. Now Kosoko was up to his neck in the slave trade, and the aggrieved Akitoye promised that if the British Navy would restore him to power, then he for his part would get rid of slave-dealing.

This being agreed, H.M.S. *Penelope*, the paddle-steamer already mentioned, was considered for the operations, but she drew too much water to enter the shallow creek where

Lagos lay in the sweltering sun. Built on a low, narrow island two miles long and fortified with a ditch, stockades, and heavy guns, it was made still more inaccessible by stakes fixed a few feet from the shore, the water being extremely shallow. Two screw steam-tenders, *Bloodhound* and *Teazer*, together with the boats from three cruisers, all under the command of Captain L. Jones, R.N., therefore went round the northern end of the island, where were the headquarters of the slave-dealers. *Bloodhound* and *Teazer*, however, soon got aground, so the biggest boats were sent under the command of Lieut. T. Saumarez, who attempted a landing, but was driven back with the loss of Midshipman Richards, whilst many were wounded, including himself.

In the meantime, *Bloodhound*, though aground, was able to shell, with her gun and howitzer, the enemy's batteries so fiercely that several of Kosoko's guns were silenced. *Teazer*, however, after doing good marksmanship, was being raked fore and aft from the shore, so her commanding officer, Captain Lyster, resolved to try and capture the offending guns. He landed his men in the boats below the battery that was doing so much damage, and in spite of being received by a hot musketry-fire from



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CAPTURE OF THE SLAVE SCHOONER 'BOLADORA' BY H.M.S. 'PICKLE'



trees and brushwood, charged, drove the enemy away, and spiked their guns. The whole thing was done with consummate gallantry. But, whilst thus engaged, one of the empty boats was captured by the enemy, though it was presently blown up. Captain Lyster and others of his party received severe wounds, but before the day was over *Teazer* was refloated.

These operations had taken place on December 26; and on the 27th the naval guns did such useful work, disabling the enemy's batteries and setting everything on fire, that Kosoko and his 2,000 followers fled. Akitoye was therefore again placed in power, and for a couple of years the slave trade on this coast was still crushed. But, on the death of Akitoye, his weak nephew would have been overcome by Kosoko, were it not for the deterrent presence of the cruisers. Eventually Lagos was ceded to Great Britain, and the presence of a garrison in the heart of the slave-trading country did much to stamp out the evil in that particular locality. The subsequent history of how Lagos was destined to form the western province of Southern Nigeria is too well known to require mentioning.

But, just as a police raid on a den of thieves may succeed only in scattering their activities and decentralising them to distant areas, so it

happened with the slave-dealing gang. And unfortunately New York merchants established considerable slave stations to the south, so that, although numerous captures of slave-ships were made, the protection of the American flag vetoed any further procedure. But from the Congo to Sierra Leone the anti-slavery cruisers established one long blockade in the year 1857, which at least caused some hindrance to the trade.

To the north of Sierra Leone, where there was no danger of political complications, energies could be employed with greater directness. Here the chiefs of the Soosoo tribe were planning a slave trade on a large scale. It was to forestall this that an expedition was undertaken in January 1858, led by Commodore C. Wise, who entered the Great Scarcies River with the *Pluto* and a small flotilla. The undertaking was adventurous, for the river was largely unexplored hitherto. By careful pioneer work in a gig, the flotilla reached a village where large rocks made the navigation impossible for anything bigger than boats.

Therefore, leaving the moderate-draught craft at anchor, thirteen boats, carrying 208 sailors and 50 marines, armed with rifles, continued their progress in an unknown country, where

the jungle and overgrown swamps gave cover on both banks to fierce savages. The commodore sent forward a lieutenant with a flag of truce, inviting the Soosoo chiefs to a conference, but the latter evaded a straight answer, and were delaying with the purpose of collecting their people from the surrounding district. It therefore became essential to push on and forestall this concentration. Having reached Kambia, he formed his boats in line abreast, fired upon the stockades, routed the enemy, set the town on fire, and on his return downstream similarly treated all the towns as far as the mouth, his own losses being less than a dozen wounded. This wholesome lesson nevertheless had to be repeated in the following year, and at last it brought the Soosoos to a proper realisation of facts, so that even Kosoko at a later date solicited friendship with the British.

Still, it was not exclusively to the west coast that the African slave trade was confined. On the south-east coast, facing the Mozambique Channel, it was carried on partly by Arabs and partly by the French, who purchased thousands of the natives for their colonists in the Isle of Bourbon, whereby the native chiefs made handsome profits. In order to counteract this business the British Government used to keep a

cruiser off the coast facing Madagascar. Owing to the complications, which were scarcely inevitable, the steps taken were rather passive than active, except on certain specific occasions.

About the beginning of 1846 H.M. Sloop *Mutine* sent in to Table Bay from the Mozambique Channel the 400-ton barque *Diana*, which had been captured after a long chase to windward one day during the previous November. She was found to be equipped for the reception of 800 slaves, and this was the sixth slave-ship which the lucky *Mutine* had confiscated within six months. Quite a pretty little affair was that when this naval brig, in conjunction with the Portuguese naval brig *Villa Flor*, entered Pomba Bay and anchored a couple of cables from the shore abreast of two notorious slave factories. Both men-of-war began a heavy fire on the Arab headquarters, which drove the slavers away. The boat parties then dashed ashore, landed, and destroyed all traces of factories and town. The Arabs, notwithstanding, kept up a very sharp fire from under cover, though only one Portuguese was killed and one marine wounded. The brief combined operation succeeded also in burning a slave-ship, and put a stop to the local trade for some time.

Within a short period of this incident another boat expedition was carried out by *Mutine*, when a party was sent to destroy a large Arab slaver which had got ashore twenty miles up one of the rivers to the north of Quilimane; but the work was done in the face of a brisk discharge of musketry.

Of recent years the slave trade off eastern Africa had been increasing considerably, because the demand for this labour sometimes raised the price of a negro to as much as a hundred dollars. The French inhabitants of Bourbon Island (better known to us as Réunion) were able to use ten or fifteen thousand slaves yearly. Lying right out in the Indian Ocean over four hundred miles to the east of Madagascar, and producing large quantities of sugar, this colony had found the labour problem acute, and the unscrupulous Arabs, with their dhows, were able to make considerable gains by this intolerable trading. Madagascar, which had passed through various phases and had at one time been famous chiefly as the base for pirates, was now the principal market for these black cargoes. Everyone knows that the Arab has always been a wonderful seaman, and he was also a determined foe. A dhow would not unusually be armed with four long guns, she

was fast, and her 150 tons burthen enabled her to carry a big freight.

As an instance of the operations which were being conducted during the late eighteenthies off this area may be cited that episode of Lieutenant Fairfax, R.N. His ship was H.M.S. *Ariel* (Commander R. Oldfield, R.N.), which was watching the Mozambique Channel. One day Fairfax was away in one of the *Ariel's* boats together with a crew of eight men and one marine. Whilst in a bay near Murka he sighted a dhow making for the land, and immediately this officer had little doubt of her character. He therefore made towards the Arab, who promptly opened fire with two guns and then tried to run the naval boat down. Fairfax was able to avoid a collision, and then, coming alongside, boarded her, followed by most of his small crew. It was a stiff and gallant fight of a minority against a foe four times more powerful : in fact, one of those picturesque affairs such as used to entertain us when we were young enough to read thrilling juvenile fiction.

After a hand-to-hand encounter, during which ten Arabs fell, and one English sailor was severely injured, as well as two others slightly wounded, the result began to show itself. The

Arabs had used knives as well as muskets and fought desperately, being angered at having their plans foiled. But now that they had been defeated and so many of their comrades had hit the deck, the remainder dived overboard and escaped to the shore. Thirty-four slaves were found below, including ten women. These were all released, and then Fairfax took his wounded men back to *Ariel*, after so quickly capturing the dhow.

Such brilliant episodes along that coast were by no means rare, and within a period of only three years as many as seventy slave dhows were taken. The lucrative nature of the trade made the risks run by the Arabs more than worth while. But gradually the assistance of the French and Portuguese became valuable and the trade was banished to its final area up the Persian Gulf, where it has diminished to comparatively small activities, thanks to the vigilant enterprise of the Royal Navy. But at the back of slavery abolition is the preponderating weight of universal opinion which demands for others that liberty which is enjoyed by all civilised peoples. The danger nowadays is that freedom may become merely the verbal cloak for unrestrained licence, but it will always be a credit to the seamen who did so much to stamp

out an evil which their forefathers had encouraged.

There is a wonderful glamour connected with the old pirates, unprincipled as they were. One can even admire the fine seamanship of lateen-rigged dhows' crews, and a sense of sportsmanship makes one almost sympathise with them at times: it seemed such hard luck that, after a long, trying voyage through boisterous weather, some interfering naval craft should come on to the scene and spoil the whole venture. The drama, too, of the mutineers aboard the old ships on the Indian route, the colour of the scene, the environment of canvas and slatting ropes, the stark simplicity of the events, and elemental passions of the actors, whilst over and above them all was the towering majesty of sea and wind—these cannot fail to attract and fascinate our fancies. But the romance is that which belongs to the past, and never existed by itself. The virility was crude and brutal, the colours were heavily laid on, the action was too melodramatic. It is well that seamen to-day inhabit better fo'c's'les, that the standard of living has risen, that discipline can be enforced without bullying, and that honest trade has taken the place of illicit business.

But neither romance nor drama will ever be

quite swept from the sea, for neither engineer nor scientist can match the untamed, majestic might of rushing gales that goad watery waves into merciless avalanches of fury. The passions of men are but childish outbursts when compared with nature really roused.

CHAPTER X

ON PATROL

DURING the few years immediately following the Great War's close most people's memories were so sensitive to recent events that it was almost too painful to reflect on the actions which had taken place. But to-day a new generation is growing up to whom the war has no suggestion of horror, but much of romance. Even from those who took part in tragic history there has, by the efflux of time, been washed away much of the biting sting. Thus it is that never has there been more popularity for serious books relating the war's incidents, and even for plays and novels dealing with that fateful period of 1914-18. Of the naval side many a good story remains still unrelated, many a noble action has been practically forgotten even by the participants themselves. But gradually, from our own and German sources, we are finding it possible to piece together the whole immense mosaic; to see both minor and major operations as one fascinating picture. Items which at one time

appeared so unimportant now gain their true appreciation, whilst spectacular affairs fit into their proper place. Glaring faults stand out with crude distinctness on all sides, but the human interest of this gigantic tussle becomes of even more absorbing interest, whether on land or sea.

Nothing, for example, is more surprising than the enemy's omission to sweep through the Dover Straits during August 1914 and bombard the English ports of embarkation, and the French ports where the British Expeditionary Force was being landed. Had it wished, the High Sea Fleet, preceded by a strong destroyer force, could have crashed through the weak Dover patrol, sped on past Beachy Head, shelled Newhaven, sunk a block-ship off the shallow entrance, and treated Havre in the same manner in which this Fleet was a few weeks later to assault Scarborough. Any action between the High Sea Fleet and the Channel Fleet would have been a British disaster, since the latter's inferior gun-power and inferior speed allowed these old-fashioned ships neither a fair fight nor hope of escape. The moral effect of such a German victory at the very opening of war would have been immense ; still more valuable strategically would have been the holding up for several days of the

Expeditionary Force's crossing—just at the very time when troops were most needed on the Continent.

All sorts of interesting corollaries might have followed. The Grand Fleet, tempted south from their northern, unboomed insecurity, might have blundered on to the minefield which the *Königin Luise* had laid off the Suffolk coast on August 5. Thus weakened by losses, it might have met the returning High Sea Fleet, flushed with success, in a decisive battle. Or, again, had the enemy persisted down the English Channel, laying a minefield off the Nab and Portland Bill, shelling to perdition every steamer sighted, and then, under cover of night, turning up the Irish Sea, sinking liners right and left, next steaming round the north of Scotland to North Sea waters once more, another interesting crisis would have been created. In the first instance, something resembling a panic would have been set up at the approaches to these British isles, and it would have been unsafe to move transport, food ship, or fleet-supply vessels. The High Sea Fleet might have ended its escapade with a full-dress action against the Grand Fleet, placed athwart the route down the North Sea towards Heligoland Bight, or a light August fog might have

allowed the former with luck to reach home. In any case, the Channel episode would have enabled the German Army to gain valuable time and do its worst, whilst in England an unfortunate depression would have been inaugurated at the outset.

But we may leave such abstract studies, and take a kaleidoscopic view of those simple incidents which were going on all the time away from public gaze, hardly appreciated when so many bigger affairs filled the mind. Some of the best yarns are those concerned with little vessels, and there were acts of seamanship which must never be forgotten as long as men go afloat. One of the most difficult jobs was that of June 12, when the Norwegian three-masted barque *Bellgrade* was found by the patrol vessels off the Welsh coast. This sailing vessel, one of the few survivors of a former age, was shelled by U 35 in a position 70 miles W.S.W. of St. Ann's Head. About 11.30 a.m. this same forenoon she was sighted by some Scotch steam drifters who were based on Milford Haven. *Bellgrade* was found to have been abandoned, her sails were furled, but she was in a bad state; for the stern was submerged to a depth of four feet.

The two drifters *Cromorna* and *Marys* took

her in tow with a 100-fathom rope of 3-inch wire, whilst *Ivy Green* kept a sharp look-out astern. It was no easy job hauling an awkward weight like this against an easterly wind with a moderate sea, but a speed of four knots was maintained until about dawn on June 14. Sea and wind had increased, the strain on the wire became impossible, and finally it snapped. Immediate efforts were made to get the vessel again in tow, but amid all this anxiety the *Bellgrade* took a heavy list in the trough of the sea and capsized, turning keel up. The remarkable thing was that a party of drifter men, who had been placed aboard her, were not drowned. One man certainly received bruises by being struck from an iron cathead as the ship turned over, but no bones were broken. Luckily, just as she capsized, the party scrambled like flies and were all picked up. Whilst nothing more could be done at present, the armed trawler *Wistaria* was told off to remain alongside and warn passing ships of this navigational danger. And finally on June 21 *Bellgrade*, with a cargo worth £50,000, after much adventure was towed into St. Bride's Bay, where she was brought to anchor.

After the war had been going on for over a year, mines were discovered about six hundred yards



A GERMAN SUBMARINE MINELAYER



off the Nab Lightship (at the eastern end of the Isle of Wight) in an abrupt and tragic manner. The armed trawler *Erin II* was steaming along when her commanding officer, Lieut. E. G. Rule, R.N.R., heard a dull report and felt the stern of his ship being lifted out of the water. It was a curious sensation, and for a few seconds quite uncanny. This was the nineteenth of October, 1915, and the time was 12.30 p.m., most of the crew being below at dinner. Lieut. Rule only five minutes previously had come up on the bridge from his mid-day meal to relieve the officer-of-the-watch; and now, before he could quite realise what was happening, the ship's stern was blown right off. *Erin* foundered; seven men were killed or drowned. But in the height of his own danger Lieut. Rule sighted a steamer approaching, and had the presence of mind to send a drifter, who warned her to keep clear of the danger-area. Now earlier that very day the mine-sweepers had been through this locality with their wire sweeps and reported it clear; but we know now that at 1.25 a.m. the German submarine UC 5 had laid half a dozen mines between four and six hundred yards of the lightship, which apparently the sweepers had barely missed, but the *Erin* found.

These submarine-minelayers were quite a problem, since they could do their work off harbour entrances and foul important fairways with impunity. That very same morning UC 5 laid another half dozen of her deadly eggs just off the Needles. Now the base for these craft was Zeebrugge, and their way through the Dover Straits was not always easy; for, inefficient as were our nets across that defile, they were at times a serious menace. It was UC 3, a sister-ship of the last mentioned, which had an experience enough to turn the captain's hair white. She was proceeding on the surface, and was about fifteen miles off Cape Gris Nez, when she sighted a couple of drifters ahead. The submarine promptly dived, but ran foul of the drifters' nets. Finding his progress thus barred, the German captain flooded his tanks so that she sank down to the bottom of the sea, tearing the net away by sheer weight. In spite of striking the sea-bed, the submarine was undamaged as regards hull, but when the captain tried to go ahead on her motors she refused to do so, and the fuses of the main motors gave out. The position was not pretty to contemplate, and it was fairly obvious that the propellers were foul of wire netting.

It will be realised that of course she had oil





engines, which could be used only when she was on the surface, and that when submerged she must rely on her electric motors and batteries ; but at all risk she must now be brought to the surface before more air and time should be wasted. By blowing all tanks free of water, she rose, and the conning-tower was opened. The sight that revealed itself was an appalling mass of wire-netting, which covered the hull all the way from conning-tower to stern. One portion had got jammed between the rudder and an after hydroplane, whilst the bight of it had wound itself round and round the propellers. No wonder the motors had been brought up all standing. But, finally, the wire was parted by running the oil-engines, whose speed was twice that of the 8-knot motors, and UC 3 gave up her cruise, being fortunate in getting back safely to Zeebrugge.

The pluck and resource of the coastal fishermen was one of the grandest features of the naval warfare, and even when totally unarmed these crews did not hesitate to make the best of circumstances. On the seventeenth of January, 1916, the Lowestoft fishing smack *Acacia* was trawling about twenty-eight miles to the S.E. of that port in company with several others of her type. She was just a 22-ton sailing ketch

with a crew of four, Skipper James Crooks being in command. There was a definite risk to be fishing off that coast, for submarines from Zeebrugge had been very fond of coming across, laying mines, and attacking the unarmed fishermen: not that such incidents could frighten these hearty East Anglians from earning their living. On this winter's morning the wind was blowing from the south-west, about force 6, and about 10.30 the skipper sighted only a couple of miles away an unmistakable German submarine coming straight for him.

Crooks knew beyond all manner of doubt, for as recently as the previous August he had been out fishing when one of these craft had sunk his ship. It was also clear that the enemy meant to do the same thing again, and kill the whole ship's company. When just about a mile off, the Zeebrugge visitor opened fire with a machine-gun, whose bullets came spattering on board in all directions, piercing the main boom, cutting the running rigging, piercing the sails, and damaging the smack's small boat. But, unarmed as he was, Crooks was not going to lose his vessel again, so he bided his time till the submarine was only a couple of hundred yards away, and then suddenly cut adrift the trawl. The smart breeze enabled *Acacia* to spring

forward like a frightened stag, helm was put up, and the smack was steered straight for the steel vessel. The latter was small, and two men were visible in the conning tower. She came to a halt on the smack's weather bow, whereupon Skipper Crooks, in the good old sailing man-of-war manner of a bygone age, actually went about on the other tack, and with a good press of canvas headed for the German in the hope of ramming. This he very nearly achieved, but for the fact that the submarine dived and disappeared out of sight on the wooden smack's lee bow. It had been a real courageous effort on the part of Crooks, for the enemy could have riddled him till every man was a corpse and the ketch was as leaky as a basket. The Admiralty were so pleased with his behaviour that they sent him an official appreciation, together with the sum of £50.

Only a fortnight later, and in almost identically the same place, the armed drifter-trawler *Kentish Knock* was intentionally steaming with her trawl down as if she were another of the unprotected fishermen. It was evening, the smacks were working as usual all around, but *Kentish Knock* had been sent with one gun and two naval hands additional to her normal crew so as to defend the fishing fleet. Suddenly

Kentish Knock ceased going ahead, for the trawl wire had certainly become foul of something. Engines were stopped, but the foremost trawl wire stiffened bar taut and surged right ahead till it unexpectedly slacked up. Out of the water, just on the port bow, rose the conning-tower and upper deck of a submarine only fifteen yards away. Not a moment was wasted, the gun was ready and the naval petty-officer standing alongside. The enemy now came aft along the port side, and aim was taken at his waterline. This shell probably missed, for there was no explosion. A second shot was fired when the submarine was just astern: this struck the base of the conning-tower and exploded. A third shot followed as the stranger came on the starboard quarter, but this did not explode. After this the submarine disappeared into the darkness, with her conning-tower heeling over at a considerable angle.

Exactly what was the result of this action cannot definitely be stated. In the whole category of German submarines lost during the war by various causes, there are a few to which no definite reason or area can be placed. All that we know, or Germany knows, is that these unassigned failed to return home, and we shall never in this world learn any more. On the

other hand, there were instances when there was strong but unproven probability that the submarine had been sent to her doom ; and this particular episode belongs to that class. At the time when it happened, *Kentish Knock* was steaming through the darkness without lights, and the enemy, evidently not suspecting there was a trawl down, became entangled whilst making an investigation. The spot was buoyed, and a fisherman reported that five days afterwards he had fouled a heavy obstruction on the bottom close to this position, with the result that his 2½-inch trawl wire rope was parted ; the depth here being 28 fathoms.

Kentish Knock's disguise was part of a camouflage system which in course of time had become essential if anti-submarine methods were to be something more than mere direct measures. Guile was as essential as armament. So, in the hope of luring submarines against what seemed to be one more of those innocent fishing vessels, armed trawlers sometimes went to sea with the gun concealed under the shape of a boat. For this purpose some old, condemned dinghy was selected, whose sides were now cut and hinged as to drop down sideways at the moment the gun was required for action. The bow remained standing, but the stern fell

aft, the inside of the boat forming a flat surface to act as the gun platform; the cuts in the sides being hidden by the gripes which are normally seen in a ship for steadying the boats when hoisted up to the davits. Until the gun was disclosed, chains kept the sides in position. I used to look at this contrivance with amusement, yet there was no doubt that beam-on it would have been difficult for any submarine to have guessed the fake.

But such disguises were only for fishing craft and mystery ships: the rest of the Navy maintained the appearance of their true character. Now one of the most all-round, useful types which the war produced consisted of those little 'pocket' cruisers, which for want of a better name were officially designated 'sloops.' They were built in about thirteen weeks each, had a cruiser-stern, and, bow-on, rather resembled the cross-Channel mail steamers of Dover and Newhaven. They were, however, single-screw, with reciprocating engines, and armed usually with one or two 4.7 in. and one or two smaller guns. Their original use was intended for mine-sweeping, for which their light draught made them suitable, and they could clean up one of these fields with a speed far superior to that of trawlers. But besides this special

work they were employed at different times in such duties as patrolling, escorting valuable merchantmen, and salving torpedoed steamers.

On the night of February 10-11, 1916, we find four of these at work in the middle of the North Sea, whither they had been sent to pare down a minefield which the Germans had laid by the Dogger Bank a year previously. We knew all about this dangerous area and allowed it to exist, but there were navigational reasons why it should be trimmed into shape. About eighty-three miles E. by S. $\frac{1}{2}$ S. of Flamborough Head was laid a buoy, and from this position an exploration sweep was begun at 8 a.m. on February 10, the operations being carried on till dusk. The four sloops were *Arabis*, *Buttercup*, *Alyssum*, and *Poppy*, all this type being named after flowers and nicknamed 'the herbaceous border.'

About seven o'clock that evening, the day's sweeping being done, a dan-buoy fitted with a sinker and acetylene light was dropped by *Buttercup* to assist them in their work next day. *Arabis* was ordered to remain near this buoy all night, and then the other three sloops steamed off in single line ahead, but kept coming back every now and again to be in touch with

Rs

their sister ship. Now soon after 11 p.m. the officer-of-the-watch on the bridge of *Arabis* suddenly sighted something which made his pulse quicken. It was a calm night, and there was a three-quarter moon, with large patches of dark cloud. Something was moving over the waters, and moving quickly, so the officer immediately sent down a message requesting the captain (Lieut.-Commander R. R. Hallowell-Carew, R.N.) to come on the bridge ; and in the meanwhile the crew were piped to 'general quarters.'

Events now followed with cinema celerity. The captain within a few seconds observed a torpedo so close that it crossed *Arabis*' bows from port to starboard. The sloop increased to full speed, and objects were noticed on the port quarter passing across the stern at high speed, approaching her starboard quarter. Destroyers ! Three of them ! The sloop made the secret challenge, to which the strangers could not reply, and it was obvious enough that here was the enemy. *Arabis* therefore opened fire with her after 4.7 in. and two 3-pounders. The first shot from the former hit the third destroyer amidships, causing her to disappear from the fray ; but the other two returned the fire with guns and torpedo. It was believed that these

two destroyers were hit also, and presently they retired.

The sloop, however, was herself injured. She was about to inform *Buttercup*, when it was found that a shell had put the wireless out of action, and the steering gear was jammed. Speed was now reduced to 12 knots, shot-holes were stopped, the wireless was repaired, and she changed over from steam- to hand-steering. So passed another three-quarters of an hour as she continued her patrol near the dan-buoy. About a quarter after midnight *Arabis* heard *Buttercup* calling up, and five minutes later there dashed along five German destroyers, approaching in single line ahead on the starboard quarter of *Arabis*. The latter increased to full speed and opened fire on this line. Two rounds were got off from the after 4.7 in., when the empty cartridge-case of the second round unluckily stuck fast in the gun and could not be removed.

The oncoming enemy now closed rapidly, one of whose shells penetrated the sloop and struck the low-pressure cylinder, which caused the engines to stop and killed all in the engine-room but one man. A further line of five destroyers was seen on the port bow crossing from port to starboard, and *Arabis* shelled this

with her for'ard 4.7 in., and claimed to have hit the second destroyer. But almost immediately came the crisis, when a couple of torpedoes whizzed through the dark waters and struck the sloop near the bridge. This class of ship had of course no armour at all: there was no more protection to the hull than is possessed by any merchant steamer. The result was that *Arabis* broke in two, though before she sank Commander Hallowell-Carew was able to throw overboard the ship's confidential books. She was on fire, and finally went to the bottom. Only the captain, two sub-lieutenants, and fifteen others were saved by the enemy's destroyers, who launched boats to pick them up. One poor fellow, after being rescued, was being transferred to a destroyer when he slipped overboard, and was killed by being sucked into the wake of the propellers. The survivors were taken to Germany, and reached Wilhelmshaven at 2 p.m. the same day. Three of the seventeen died on the way and were buried at sea.

This unfortunate skirmish was illustrative of the risks which were continually being run by minesweepers, and is another example of the chances which the enemy possessed but did not always use. The sloops had been taken for minelayers, and after the initial attack the



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DRIFTERS AT SEA



destroyers had retired only to fetch up reinforcements. The other three escaped and got back into an east-coast port.

It was only seven weeks later that another of this flower class was caught by the enemy off the south coast of Ireland, the time being 1.48 p.m., and the ship H.M.S. *Begonia*. She was patrolling in her area when a torpedo struck her abreast of the foremost boiler-room on the port side. Seven minutes afterwards the periscope of a submarine was seen 500 yards away, three points on the port quarter, having evidently come up expecting to see the sloop sinking. Fire was opened on the German, which submerged, only to reappear 200 yards away on the port beam, and fire a second torpedo. Theoretically this should have brought certain disaster to ship and men, but it fortunately passed under the sloop's hull. A shell from *Begonia's* foremost gun exploded about the submarine's periscope, and evidently had so much effect that the enemy was not seen again till 5.30 p.m., when she was observed stationary some 10,000 yards off, though eventually she disappeared in a S.E. direction.

But *Begonia* was not intended to sink just yet. Her main steam-pipe had been carried away by the torpedo explosion, and her wireless

had been put out of action ; yet she was very much afloat. Still, a helpless and silent warship, rolling to the Atlantic swell, deaf and dumb to the outer world, is in no enviable situation when submarines are hopping around. But about 8 p.m. the American S.S. *Siberia* approached, and it was through the latter's courtesy of the sea that wireless messages were radiated asking for assistance. By this means did the news reach two other sloops which were based on Queenstown, who forthwith went to the position indicated and quitted their immediate duties. So at 10 p.m. H.M.S. *Snowdrop* arrived, and *Siberia* was able to resume her voyage. Three hours later H.M.S. *Zinnia* joined up, and by 3 a.m. *Snowdrop* was steaming north-west with *Begonia* in tow, and *Zinnia* ready to repel any renewed submarine attack. During the night all went well, till at 8.30 a.m. the naval tug *Warrior* took over *Begonia* and brought her into Queenstown at 5 p.m. This sloop was then taken in hand at Haulbowline dockyard, and converted during the next few weeks to resemble a small merchant vessel, with a false stern and such alterations to her upper works that her own original designer would never have recognised her. She thus became a decoy, or 'Q'-ship, under the

command of that keen and courteous Lieut.-Commander Basil S. Noake, R.N., and put to sea cleverly disguised on August 9 of that same year ; but again she met a submarine, and this time finally, for one day she steamed out of Queenstown Harbour, and has never been seen again. But there were others of this flower class, such as *Nasturtium* and *Primula* (which were both sunk in the Mediterranean) and *Genista* (torpedoed out in the Atlantic one evening, just as a terrible October gale was working up) ; and a number of sloops employed in various patrol areas which came to a violent end only after having performed very fine service.

One of the most interesting naval episodes, and yet generally unknown, was that which occurred off Havre on the fifth of April 1916. Few British or American soldiers realise how determinedly German submarines operated off this gate to France, using mines and torpedoes in an effort to sink the steamers running between France and England. The attempt was thus made late in the war, but it was no isolated enthusiasm. It was because of these activities that a number of our steam drifters were sent to work off Havre in the hope of trapping the enemy. A favourite submarine area in Havre roads was near the whistling buoy ; and on the

morning mentioned it was reported just before five that a submarine had been sighted thereabouts. As soon as the tide served, six British net-drifters—*Endurance*, *Welcome Star*, *Stately*, *Comrades*, *Pleiades*, and *Pleasance*, under Lieutenant J. M'Loughlin, R.N.R.—put to sea.

A series of events followed rapidly as soon as this little squadron arrived off the whistling buoy. *Pleiades* had shot her nets two miles to the westward, the other drifters followed, but all of a sudden, just when everything was ready for watching and waiting, *Comrades* felt something bumping along the bottom of the ship. She was still wondering what could be the cause when up went a firework signal from *Endurance*, indicating that a submarine was already in her net. Immediately afterwards the periscope of a submarine struck the rudder of *Endurance* so heavily as to put it out of action. This drifter had not quite completed laying all her nets, but she now began paying out just as quickly as the enemy would take them. In this manner he became wholly enveloped, so that *Endurance* had eventually to let go altogether. Like a whale, trapped and infuriated, the submarine was trying to hurry off to the north-east, but making a terrible fuss.

As a result of *Endurance* having fired a signal,



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TWO DEPTH CHARGES : AFTER EXPLOSION



there flocked round her all the other drifters, together with the French torpedo-boat *Le Trombe*. Attached to these nets was always an indicator-buoy, by which an observation could still be kept on a captured submarine's movements. *Le Trombe* perceived this indicator, darted ahead of it, judged by this means the enemy's exact position, recrossed three times, and dropped three bombs with good judgment. By the time this trip was completed those in the submarine had endured enough, for she now rose to the surface. Some of the German crew then proceeded to jump overboard, but five were picked up by *Welcome Star*, using a line and buoy. She then launched her boat, took off the three German officers and put them aboard *Le Trombe*. The drifter *Stately* by means of lines saved seven more of the men.

With the prisoners all safe, the next thing was to try and salve the submarine, which turned out to be UB 26. French trawlers came up and took her in tow, whilst some of the drifters assisted or towed in *Endurance* to Havre. It was the common practice during the war that, just before surrendering, a German submarine would open the sea-cocks. This had evidently been done aboard UB 26 ;

for whilst on the way to Havre she sank. Cross-bearings were, however, taken of the position, which was buoyed, the depth being ten fathoms, and some valuable information was obtained from her. German charts were found revealing two sets of noteworthy facts. One was the position of the mines and buoys laid by the Germans off the coast of Belgium ; and the other was the supposed positions of minefields as laid by the Allies, together with the British net-barrage shown marked extending across the Dover Straits from the South Goodwins.

This submarine had left the Ems on the afternoon of March 19 for Zeebrugge, her new base, and so into the canal up to Bruges, where she arrived on the afternoon of March 21, having kept two or three miles off the Dutch coast whilst coming south. One morning at the end of that same month she set out from Zeebrugge about ten o'clock, bound down-Channel, and crossed the Dover barrage about midway between the South Goodwins and the Outer Ruytingen. It was the German custom to employ the same U-boat regularly in the same area, so that her captain and officers might in time become experts as to what usually went on. Off Havre definite boats were appointed from Zeebrugge, which was a

comparatively short distance away ; but there was always the unpleasant, if not prohibitive, Dover barrier to be tackled both coming and going. It was therefore attempted, as a rule, under cover of night.

For their work in having captured UB 26 the drifter crews were highly commended by the Admiralty. The sum of £1,000 was divided amongst them, and the French Government sent them 8,000 francs. Both Lieutenant M'Loughlin and Skipper T. C. Wylie of *Endurance* were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, whilst two ratings received the Distinguished Service Medal. The capture of the enemy was due entirely to the promptitude of Lieut. M'Loughlin, and the skill of Skipper Wylie in so handling his nets that the submarine was never able to tear her way through. It was only a day or two previously that these drifters had arrived on the Havre station, but the value in war of fishermen's peace-time occupation was never better illustrated.

Only a few days after this came another incident, but on the English side of the Channel, off Folkestone. The merchant S.S. *Shenandoah*, 3,886 tons, was steaming along when she struck a mine that had been laid by one of the German submarines. On patrol close at hand

was the armed trawler *Macfarlane* (Lieut. A. H. Barnes, R.N.R.), which steamed up alongside, regardless of the mines, and told the *Shenandoah's* master to put his helm hard a-starboard, in the hope of saving the ship by beaching. The master complied, but before she could gain the shore *Shenandoah* sank. *Macfarlane* then sent off his own boat to the rescue, and also picked up two of the steamer's boats. But next there was presented a curious situation.

There, floating about in the strong tide of the English Channel, was yet a third boat, but bottom uppermost. The three men who were sitting on her capsized keel were easily taken off, as were another three who were found clinging to adjacent wreckage. But now it was reported that knocking could be distinctly heard within the upset boat, which suggested that in the launching of her the usual thing had happened as occurs when merchant ships have to lower at sea with any way on. The boat had been turned over before the davit-falls could be cast off. Now to upright a steamer's heavy lifeboat at sea is not an easy problem, but it had to be done quickly if lives were not to be forfeited.

Lieut. Barnes signalled the armed trawler

Return, also near by, to come alongside the boat, put a tackle on it, and so turn it over. This was done without waste of time, and there, before wondering eyes, were displayed two men. They were *Shenandoah's* wireless-operator and a fireman. For twenty minutes they had been confined in this awful condition with death seeming inevitable. They were thoroughly exhausted, but safely rescued, and for his coolness as well as resource in bringing about what he did, the Admiralty subsequently sent Lieut. Barnes a letter of appreciation.

CHAPTER XI

GAMBLING WITH DEATH

ONE of the most inexplicable instances of Teutonic psychology was that decision in the year 1916 to send German submarines all the way across the Atlantic to the United States of America. To any ordinary man of common reasoning powers it would seem that such an order must have evolved from a mind still as undeveloped as that of a child. The sinkings of *Lusitania* and *Sussex* by submarines had brought about the cumulative effect of straining the German-American diplomatic relationship almost to breaking-point. And then, at a time when it was entirely to Germany's interests that America should not enter the war, *Deutschland*, *Bremen*, and U 53 were despatched with a view to showing neutral Americans what German submarines were capable of performing. Was this bit of naval policy likely to dispose trans-Atlantic critics favourably towards ruthless undersea warriors? Or would it cause some suspicion?

The answer seems to require no hesitation.

Still, the German naval high command thought that the interests of their country would be assisted by the completion of what were unquestionably fine voyages. One of the most distinguished German senior officers, Admiral von Trotha, however, declared that it was 'preposterous and paradoxical' to suppose that peace with the United States would be propagated by carrying hostilities all the way across the ocean to the very approaches off that coast. And to-day, now that blind passions have given way to cool, clear logic, there are not wanting many able men of his own country who entirely agree with this Admiral.

Deutschland and *Bremen* were both submarine merchant ships. As we know from a recent statement made by Captain Hans Rose, who was one of the cleverest of the U-boat commanders, each of these two big craft was given a mercantile skipper. Captain Koenig was appointed to *Deutschland*, and Captain Schwartzkopff to *Bremen*. Both in pre-war days had been in command of North German Lloyd liners, and both during the war were by Captain Rose taught the art of a submarine officer. Captain Koenig went across to Baltimore and got his ship back to Germany in safety. *Bremen*, on

the other hand, disappeared, possibly through collision with a ship of the British naval forces, though we shall never definitely know. It was in August 1916 that she left Heligoland for New London, and on September 17 Captain Hans Rose left Heligoland in U 53 with instructions, as a warship, to attack British war vessels; to make a short visit to Newport, Rhode Island; destroy Allied merchant shipping and neutral shipping that had cargoes destined for the Allies.

U 53 proceeded viâ north of the Shetlands, thence across to the Newfoundland Bank; on October 7 lay off Long Island Sound, and then entered Newport, Rhode Island. Rose himself went ashore for fifteen minutes, and after only two and a half hours in harbour he took this submarine to sea again. On October 8 he was off the Nantucket lightship, and here he stopped no fewer than seven merchantmen, sinking the three British steamers *Strathdene* (4,321 tons), *West Point* (3,847 tons), and *Stephano* (3,449 tons) by torpedoes and bombs. The crews were allowed to escape in their boats to Nantucket lightship. That same night U 53 began her return voyage, and, having passed by the Hebrides and Shetlands, was back at Heligoland on October 28.

Unquestionably it was a trying undertaking ably accomplished, but the molesting of an American merchant steamer and the Dutch S.S. *Blommersdyk*, far from winning any friends for Germany's cause, stirred up emotion that otherwise might have remained neutral. Six months later the United States entered the war on the side of the Allies.

Amazing scenes were that same autumn to be witnessed from the North Sea: such sights of horror as one hopes may never again meet human gaze. It was one area in a world gone mad on land, on sea, below water, and in the sky. Those three days September 23, 24, and 25 must be taken together to appreciate the terrible concentration of destruction. Thus on the 23rd, whilst U 53 was on her way across the Atlantic, there was an airship raid on the east coast of England and London. Serious casualties were caused, but the two German airships L 32 and 33 were brought down. From the 23rd to the 25th there was a big submarine raid on the North-East English fishing fleets, which resulted in the total loss of thirty fine fishing vessels. It is by contemplation of these combined losses to friend and foe, in lives and money, that the utter futility of war stands out stark and stupid.

Like the hand of fate, this submarine menace crept steadily up the North Sea. Between half-past ten in the morning and half-past seven in the evening on the 23rd the harvesters of the sea forfeited their ships in an area from thirty to sixty-five miles S.E. of the Humber. Next day the submarine had worked further north, and resumed operations at 8 a.m. to the east and north-east of Flamborough Head. That evening at half-past eight she captured the steam fishing trawler *Fisher Prince* (125 tons), belonging to Scarborough, the incident taking place twenty miles north-east of that port. A German naval lieutenant and eight hands came aboard, all night both submarine and prize proceeding in company. By this means other vessels of the Scarborough fishing fleet were captured, including the steam trawler *Otter* (123 tons), the crews being transferred to *Fisher Prince*. Between 4 a.m. and 10 a.m. the various prizes were sunk by gunfire. About the latter hour there came into view the Norwegian S.S. *Tromp*, which was ordered to stop. The different crews in *Fisher Prince* were now received by the Norwegian, and at eleven o'clock the Germans sent *Fisher Prince* to the bottom, together with another trawler named *Seal*, thirty-three miles E. by S. of

Hartlepool. The submarine captain informed *Seal's* skipper that this was the twenty-first vessel he had sunk that day.

The whole of this raid was comprised within forty-eight hours. Aided by misty weather, the enemy had been sighted neither by one auxiliary patrol craft nor by a single destroyer. Another fishing fleet, consisting of drifters and also working off the Scarborough vicinity, was unmolested. This fleet was under the escort of the armed trawler *Rigoletto*, who during the night of the 24th certainly heard heavy firing to the eastward, but rigidly stuck to her duty and decided not to be drawn away from the ships committed to her charge. Such a catastrophe as befell these north-east fishermen was unfortunate, and for a brief time the whole of that industry off this part of the coast had to be stopped. But raids can be over-estimated in their value, and the loss of the two German airships L 32 and L 33 more than weighted the scales in favour of Great Britain.

Two months later there came another airship raid on this coast. At 11.45 p.m. on the night of November 27 the armed trawler *Vidette* was patrolling about eight miles off Hartlepool when she heard the unmistakable sound of

bombs bursting from the sky and the banging of guns. Ten minutes later she observed a wonderful bright light in the sky, and almost immediately the airship L 34 began descending in fierce flames to the south-west. As early as 9.15 p.m. *Rigoletto* had intercepted on her wireless Zeppelin call-signs, and this trawler, with a couple of others, remained with anti-aircraft guns ready for action. But, in fact, it was Lieut. I. V. Pyott, of the Royal Flying Corps, who from his aeroplane at 11.45 had set the airship alight when over West Hartlepool, and she fell into the sea about 1,800 yards to the east of Heugh lighthouse. From the next day until about the end of that year five armed drifters from the Tyne were engaged on this airship wreck, assisting in the salvage and preventing the enemy from interfering.

But on this same night of November 27-28 there came a raid further down the coast by the airship L 21. The armed trawler *Volesus*, based on Great Yarmouth, was patrolling off Southwold, further to the southward, when at 5.30 a.m. she heard gunfire, with explosions, to the westward, and altered course therefore landwards. Half an hour later there appeared in the sky an airship at which *Volesus* loosed

off a dozen rounds of common shell. After a further thirty-five minutes this L 21 burst into flames, fell stern first into the sea, and at once sank out of sight, the position being eight miles east of Lowestoft. The trawler's fire may have been of contributory effect, but it was Flight-Lieut. Pulling who from his aeroplane set her on fire and sent her to her doom.

Airships and submarines at their best were dangers to their enemies : at their worst both these types of vessels were death-traps to their own crews. And when trouble overtook them it came with quick, though heavy, tread. Consider the plight of that German submarine U 89, which in February 1918 was operating off the North of Ireland, an area that was of the greatest importance ; for along through here ran the steamship track from America to Liverpool, carrying great liners with troops and supplies bound ultimately for France. On the fourth of that month the liner *Aurania* (13,936 tons) had been torpedoed without any warning, and sunk about fifteen miles N.W. of Inishtrahull. On the following day the liner *Tuscania* (14,348 tons) had been sunk in a similar manner, and with the loss of forty-four lives, a little further east : that is seven miles north of Rathlin Island lighthouse. The

loss of two Cunarders in two consecutive days within one small area was serious enough to cause anxiety.

And then a week later H.M.S. *Roxburgh*, a cruiser, was steaming through these waters where U 89 was lurking to sink others. It was the twelfth of February, the time was 11.20 p.m.; the weather had been foggy, but ten minutes ago it had somewhat cleared. The night was, however, very dark with low visibility, and at this particular moment *Roxburgh* was steaming at 18 knots through about the very position where *Aurania* had been hit. Suddenly only a hundred and fifty yards just on the port bow a dark object was seen on the surface: both the cruiser's navigating-officer and the officer-of-the-watch agreed that this was no other than a submarine. Here was one of those incidents which at first seems a mere coincidence: but actually it was most natural. The submarine was (from the enemy's point of view) rightly placed in the very centre of an important line of communication. Quite properly, too, this submarine was on the surface, because under the cover of darkness and fog she could charge her batteries, give the craft an airing, and allow her crew to come up for a 'breather.'

Roxburgh's responsible officer, Lieut.-Commander R. Smitharck, R.N., had only seconds in which to avail himself of this golden opportunity that had come as a reward of vigilance: and he took it. The order was given to starboard helm, and forthwith U 89 was rammed with such force as to cause a flash and explosion. There was a great noise, and the shock was terrific, the cruiser (in spite of her speed) being brought up temporarily almost to a standstill. Cries from drowning men rose and faded away, and then one portion of the submarine sped by along the port side: U 89 and her men were out of sight—falling, dropping, hurtling fast through the cold dark waters. Next morning two pieces of metal from Germany were recovered from *Roxburgh's* bow. Commander Smitharck was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his achievement. Of course, such a brief drama might have ended in an exactly opposite manner; for the submarine was excellently placed for attack. Had she been trimmed down, with tubes and men ready, nothing but chance could have prevented her from torpedoing *Roxburgh*—except that one most essential element of a smart look-out.

Vivid imaginations may decide for themselves as to which is the more terrible death : cremation in a flaming Zeppelin or drowning in a U-boat. There is on record that weird story of the German submarine which cruised about the North Sea aimlessly with every man and officer below dead. This yarn has been already told and need not be stressed further. For the authenticity of the following terrible episode I will vouch. The number of the submarine, the names of officers, the base whence she issued, the date and locality of her loss are all available, but, the war being now past, I intentionally refrain from adding these details, lest they cause agony of mind to some mother or wife across the North Sea when she realises the purgatory through which her man passed away. It will be enough to call this German submarine by the fake number UZ 101 : otherwise the facts are literally faithful.

The total complement, officers and men, consisted of thirty-five, and all had gone well until this fatal morning a few minutes after four o'clock ; that psychological hour when human nature is at its weakest, and most collisions at sea take place. At this time her captain had just given orders to dive, having,

as usual, been proceeding during the dark hours on the surface ; when there was an ominous grating noise outside the hull as if she had fouled some wire net, or perhaps a mine : the kind of noise, in fact, that some of our submarines which negotiated the Chanak minefield up the Dardanelles experienced. UZ 101 had just reached her appointed depth when along the starboard side there came the explosion from a powerful mine ; and, in spite of the surprising strength and double hull of these submarines, she received considerable damage.

What now ensues is a study of inevitability : the tragedy of human helplessness against merciless fate. Everyone who has been for a cruise in a submarine well knows that she is a marine box-of-tricks, as full of gadgets as the inside of a watch. To the mind not in tune with all that is claimed for the benefits of machinery, a submarine's internal economy suggests a nightmare brought on in the days of our youth by reading Jules Verne's stories too recently before going to bed. The canned air, the fumes of fuel, the odour of lubricating oil, the continuous turning of levers and screws dinning the nerves, the sense of suppressed *joie de vivre*, the deadly-earnest look on the

faces of all, and a few young heads gone prematurely grey, the sense of being cooped up in a steel prison that may never be opened; and, finally, the mass of gauges, dials, meters everywhere grinning with materialistic glee—these form the environment, which has no ennobling effect on its inhabitants. The general impression is not that free sea-life which belongs to surface ships, but a clever, subtle devilishness that is characteristic of a different sphere.

So, when UZ 101 found the water pouring into the stern torpedo compartment, every one of these clever mechanical seamen knew that the worst thing which can happen to a submarine had begun. Modern marine engineers are marvellous wizards when up against bad luck, and many a liner with broken shaft has been brought safe home; but to repair the hull of a submarine surrounded by an increasing pressure of water is too much. In order to restore the boat's trim, the captain sent his crew forward, but she was too far down aft for this to have any influence. Down and down she dropped, and in the sea poured. The ballast tanks in the stern were damaged badly, and the engine-room was now filling with water. What could be done? The engineer-officer

plainly realised that the craft was beyond the possibility of being saved : all that he could do was to keep her on an even keel. But at this point she stopped sinking and touched bottom in about eighty odd feet. From that grave she could never rise again by the combined skill of even thirty-five men.

Whilst, fathoms above, the sun was leaping from the sea to enlighten a spring day, the stream of water began to advance steadily into this steel cavern from aft. It penetrated into the control-room through the voice-pipes and ventilating-trunks ; it got into the electric batteries, which began to gas off poisonous fumes. The atmosphere would soon be unbearable, and to this affliction was now added the most diabolical of all. It was as if science, which had been against its will employed for settling men's quarrels, was now about to exert its own ability to punish. For the advancing water gradually increased the air pressure in an ever-diminishing space, so that the men could breathe only with the utmost difficulty. Hydraulic power was now the bullying terror.

Think of this incredible situation ; imagine the thoughts that raced through the more sensitive minds ; conceive the community trying hard to find an excuse for delaying the

appointment with Death the visitor. An exit by way of the torpedo hatch in the fore torpedo-room was thought of, so that by this means at least they might reach the surface, even if it meant perishing in the tide. But, after several unsuccessful attempts to open this hatch, the idea was given up.

From now the drama's pace quickens. Every notion and experiment had been reviewed and dismissed, and the water had so far risen that even the bravest men forfeited even the thought of escape. Not all the crudest stories in the grandest Guignol manner could beat the poignancy of this middle act : but the tenseness was suddenly aggravated by the most desperate of the company. Suicide ! They would not surrender to suffocation ; they owned no philosophy of life which demanded of them a patience till finality : thus some of them plugged up their nose and mouth with wadding, threw themselves into the water that was within the boat, and so died. As this self-murder fashion spread through the ship, some tried to shoot themselves, but found the release denied them. The pistols had become wet and did not fire.

This was the climax of the great drama, for after the water had risen to a height of three

feet and the internal pressure had now been magnified considerably, it was found possible to open the forward and conning-tower hatches against the pressure outside. Through the latter escaped the captain and engineer-officer, and about a score of the crew made their way through the former. This was another dread experience. Such was the pressure of the air in the men's lungs that whilst escaping some were unable to keep their mouths closed, and continually exhaled large volumes of air. In the case of a few, the sudden change of pressure caused their lungs to burst, so that the bodies sank again screaming with agony.

Now, some might have wondered if it were any good to reach the surface at all. There would be nothing to which they could cling, and it would be a case of leaping from one kind of death to another. Of about twenty-two who made the terrific attempt to gain the light of day, most definitely perished ; but a handful representative of all ranks survived, and these consisted of two officers, two petty-officers, besides two men. But how came they to be saved? The answer is that just after four that morning a patrol vessel on her station heard a heavy double explosion, which was evidently close by, for this ship too was shaken.

The latter began searching the neighbourhood, and soon came to large patches of oil. Having followed this oil up-tide, a spot was reached where bubbles of air were rising. It was still dark, so the position was buoyed and search was continued for any wreckage. An hour later came daylight, when the patrol vessel sighted three Germans swimming in the tide. They were promptly picked up by her, and a further three were hauled aboard by another patrol craft. One dead body was also discovered, and this was picked up by a third patrol. All six survivors had lost consciousness by the time they were rescued, but they were taken ashore to hospital and given every attention. They eventually recovered, but even for some days after being hauled out of the sea they were still expectorating blood and complaining of deafness. The loss of this submarine was to the Allies important and necessary at a period when merchantmen and war vessels were being sunk with terrible regularity. At a time when the enemy was likely to beat Britain through starvation, every U-boat sunk was for the people's welfare. The whole of the anti-submarine war was a matter of wits plus a certain amount of luck, good or bad. If UZ 101, instead of hitting a snag,

had, on the contrary, sighted a 20,000-ton transport full of troops and hospital nurses; or a big battleship with a thousand officers and men; a couple of well-placed torpedoes would have sent hundreds of people into eternity. As it was, only twenty-nine passed over the great divide. But the lesson of life which those adventurous six learned from their experience must surely have been that even in the most awful of crises there is always the chance of hope winning through.

Out of this particular submarine's pathetic horror one has no desire to make political gain, or to plead that one service has all the virtues and the other has all the defects. Such a suggestion would be untrue. But it is undeniable that, in the above affair, discipline broke under the weight of exceptional circumstances. Heroism and self-denial, a firm resolution to die quietly and nobly without impatience or panic, were not distinguishing features; and there was something about the manner of the final scramble which had better not be told.

In contrast with this incident may be mentioned that of a certain British submarine. Her captain was one of my friends. A young, promising officer, little more than a boy, full of spirits and always up to some pranks, he

was, however, very much the commander of his craft and strictly a disciplinarian in service matters. Now, one day this submarine was in a most unfortunate accident rammed by one of our own destroyers during the war, with the result that, as UZ 101, she sank to the bottom. When it became unquestioned that officers and men were all doomed, and that the submarine's gaping wound in a short time would admit death, the young skipper informed his shipmates that they had just time to scribble a few last words to relatives, and told them that eventually there would arrive a salvage party, who, after raising the craft, would see that the letters reached home. Next, having himself sat down and written his official report, telling the whole story of the accident and how admirably every one of his shipmates had behaved, and how they were going to meet death together as real sailors, the captain drew his men up in line. And, just as he placed himself at their head, as if about to receive some distinguished guest, Death himself came aboard.

CHAPTER XII

HIGH SEA FLEETS

It has been stated on many occasions, not only by the casual observer, but even by those in exalted positions who should have been better informed, that after the Battle of Jutland the German Fleet never put to sea until it came forth to surrender two and a half years later. And this assertion has been again made so recently that perhaps it is not out of place here to show that it is an historical fallacy. On more than one occasion German capital ships did come up the North Sea, but the particular occasion which we shall now consider has not received in the popular mind that attention which it most certainly deserves.

Quite apart from any other feature, this episode of the Great War is of exceptional interest for two reasons. First, had everything happened as it just failed to occur, there would have been fought the greatest naval battle of all times, and one that would probably have ended the war a couple of years earlier

than was the case. But, secondly, this engagement was frustrated by the merest fluke, which proves that in the affairs of nations, as in the careers of men, luck certainly does play a not inconspicuous part. From the human side this unfought battle is as entertaining a yarn as the North Sea can give us. The immense naval splendour seen that summer's day, the tremendous material cost, and the still greater issues which hung on the thickness of a hair, are such that perhaps nothing like it will ever recur. And there emerges that olden lesson that the most brilliant plans of the cleverest people may be swept into complete failure by the smallest caprice of chance.

On the one hand we have the extraordinarily thorough and detailed Teutonic preparations to create an ingenious trap, which seemed on paper as complete as human mind could make them : on the other we see the whole complicated machinery thrown into confusion by the failing of the smallest bit of mechanism, which prevented the trap from working at the critical moment. The fight was unbloody, but there was for all that no little contest between intellects. Such clashes are the very essence of great drama, and therefore the basis of a good story. Now that so many years

have passed, and the world's opinion is to discourage international bitterness, we can afford to study this particular subject as some would hold a 'post-mortem' on a game of bridge, or dissect an important football match—that is to say, for the purposes of intellectual pleasure and improvement.

After the Battle of Jutland, which was fought on May 31—June 1, 1916, the German dockyards were busily occupied repairing and refitting wounded ships: but by the middle of August the High Sea Fleet was ready once more to operate. The enemy's plan from the early stages of the war had been to make raids on the English coast, and then to hurry back home. The bombardments of Scarborough in December 1914, and of Lowestoft at Easter 1916, are instances. But the post-Jutland intention was to use an east coast bombardment not as a main object, but with the ulterior motive of attracting the Grand Fleet into an ambush. The German High Sea Fleet was to be employed not for a full-dress battle, but as a bait to entice the British Fleet into a skilfully laid snare of submarines, whose under-water torpedoes were to deal the actual blows.

The High Sea Fleet was to leave Germany

on such a day and at such a time, so that it would arrive off the Durham coast and bombard Sunderland at sunset on August 19. The enemy realised that instantly the land wires would announce the news south to the Admiralty in Whitehall, and that Admiral Jellicoe would sweep south down the North Sea with the Grand Fleet. But whilst the High Sea Fleet under cover of darkness was rushing back to the Heligoland Bight, the U-boats were to take up certain allotted positions and attack the approaching British naval forces. There could be no possible confusion for these submarines. Since the whole of the High Sea Fleet would have left the area, every surface warship seen in the periscope would be British and thus a target. 'The main object of our enterprise,' admitted Admiral Scheer, 'was to defeat portions of the English Fleet; the bombardment of Sunderland was only a secondary object, merely a means to this end.'

It is curious how tenaciously the German naval mind held to this strategy. The Scarborough and Gorleston raids had merely consisted of advertising the Teutonic presence by bombardment, and then hurrying away, leaving a trap consisting of a minefield. The later



ADMIRAL SCHEER



development was to use the mobile mine—that is to say the torpedo discharged from an invisible craft—for the same purpose. Technically it was a great improvement; for not only did it enable the explosive weapon to be placed with greater geographical accuracy, but it eliminated the danger of German surface ships carrying mines themselves. When a mine is once laid, its position cannot be changed unless it accidentally breaks adrift. But a submarine can at the last hour be ordered by wireless to shift her position as may be necessary. The series of German traps for August 19, 1916, was to consist of four separate and movable lines of U-boats, arranged athwart the probable direction of the Grand Fleet. These lines were as follows : (1) A line running in a N.E. and S.W. direction off the Northumbrian coast abreast of Coquet Island, some thirty odd miles north of Sunderland ; (2) A line running east and west from Flamborough Head ; (3) A line disposed to the westward of those German mines that had been laid east of the Swarte Bank minefield on September 11 and 12, 1915. The submarine line here was placed N.W. and S.E. and consisted of craft that had been sent over from Zeebrugge. (4) Another group of

Flanders submarines was to lie about N.W. and S.E. off the Texel.

Line (3) was well off the English coast, and (4) was an obvious trap in case any of the Grand Fleet or Commodore Tyrwhitt's Harwich force of light cruisers and destroyers should pass that way. All four movable submarine lines were controlled by an officer serving aboard one of Scheer's battleships, and could be shifted over the North Sea by wireless as a chess-player's hand moves his pieces over the board.

These lines had not merely the aggressive duty of attack, but were so placed as to act in a scouting capacity for sending information across to the High Sea Fleet: the whole of the submarines' disposition had thus been worked out with great ingenuity. Now, a still further piece of foresight was the arrangement of eight airships in an elaborate manner. Reckoning from north to south down the North Sea, the first line stretched from Kinaird Head, Scotland, to the south of Norway: this being patrolled by the four airships L 30, L 32, L 24, and L 22. By this means Admiral Jellicoe's Battle Fleet, coming down from Scapa Flow, could be reported. Off the Firth of Forth cruised L 31 in the air, who was in a

position to report Admiral Beatty's Battle Cruiser Fleet leaving their anchorage in the Forth. Off Sunderland itself was L 11. Off the Lincolnshire coast was L 21, whilst the southern area of the North Sea was patrolled by L 13. It was the duty of this airship to keep an eye on the movements of Commodore Tyrwhitt's force based on Harwich. Scheer's means for receiving intelligence were, theoretically, extensive. 'I hoped by this means,' he said, 'to be able to get early news of the approach of any considerable English force.' In practice, however, reports from these airships were not entirely trustworthy, partly because of the unreliable aerial navigation, and partly because they transmitted negative rather than positive information. Any officer in any intelligence service well knows that unless the information sent is clear, precise, positive, and can admit of no other interpretation but that which is intended, it were better to remain silent. The North Sea is a comparatively small area for air vessels to keep under observation. Every bit of news was required to be sent only after meticulous care, since a false premise would lead to a false conclusion.

Such, then, were the thorough preparations

which had been made by the enemy, and now the stage of the war theatre was in all respects ready for the great drama. On the night of August 18 the High Sea Fleet came out of the River Jade at 8 p.m. and put to sea. The force consisted of five battle-cruisers, the Third and First Battle Squadrons (each comprising eight ships), or a total of 21 units, besides destroyers. The Second Battle Squadron had been assigned the duty of protecting the German Bight. Of the five vessels forming the Battle-Cruiser Squadron, three (viz. *Bayern*, *Grosser Kurfurst*, and *Markgraf*) were actually battleships. Two were assigned to their new duties because two German battle-cruisers were still under repair as the result of the Jutland battle; and *Bayern*, which was the first German ship to carry 15-inch guns, was added to this squadron for fear of coming in contact with Admiral Beatty's *Queen Elizabeths*. Admiral Scheer stationed his Battle-Cruiser Squadron twenty miles ahead of his Battle Fleet, for the purpose of acting as a scouting force and to ensure immediate tactical co-operation with the Battle Fleet, should the British forces be encountered.

Let us leave the German Fleet, for the

present, steaming out with its screen of destroyers from the Heligoland Bight to cross the North Sea; and let us see what was happening to the Grand Fleet.

Just before the Battle of Jutland an unusually large number of enemy submarines had been reported in the North Sea, and now this mid-August the same interesting fact was again noticeable. As a more or less steady duty our auxiliary armed vessels, such as the trawlers, the yachts, and motor craft, were accustomed to U-boats appearing in the respective areas: but in the middle of May Scheer concentrated all his available submarines and sent them to take up positions off the Humber, Firth of Forth, Moray Firth, and Scapa Flow from May 23—that is a week before the coming battle. One of these craft was U 74, and she was sunk off the N.E. Scottish coast by the four trawlers *Searanger*, *Oku*, *Rodino*, and *Kimberley* after a stiff little fight on May 27. So in August it was fairly probable, from the number of submarine appearances reported, that the Germans were about to attempt some new project on a big scale: in other words, the High Sea Fleet was coming out.

In order to meet with the enemy, the Grand

Fleet was ordered to make one of its periodical sweeps down the North Sea, and about the same time that Admiral Scheer was leaving for the north, Admiral Jellicoe, with the Grand Fleet, was leaving Scapa Flow for the south that same evening of August 18. Shortly after this departure, the Commander-in-Chief's flagship, *Iron Duke*, screened by a couple of destroyers, went ahead to communicate with *Royalist*, and at 7.55 p.m. a U-boat fired a torpedo which passed close astern of one of these two destroyers. Thus the enemy's plan had been put into action immediately. Admiral Jellicoe now made a warning signal to his fleet, which opened out for the purpose of avoiding torpedo attacks.

Nothing further happened for the present, as the cruise continued still southerly, and in the early hours of August 19 we can picture this Battle Fleet, preceded thirty miles ahead by Admiral Beatty's battle-cruisers, light cruisers, and destroyer screen. It was at 5.55 a.m. that submarine-line (1) to the N.E. of Coquet Island proved itself a most effectual trap. For H.M.S. *Nottingham*, one of the light cruiser screen, whilst zig-zagging ahead of the battle-cruisers, was (when in Lat. 55.34 N., Long. 0.12 E.) twice torpedoed on the port

side. She still remained afloat, but half an hour later she was torpedoed a third time, and sank at 7.10 a.m. The first two torpedoes were fired by U 63, and the death-blow by U 52.

Meanwhile the German airship patrol was soon to be sighted. From 8.24 a.m. onwards these aircraft were being fired at, but at too long a range for effective shooting. It was ascertained by the British directional wireless stations that the air patrol stretched across the North Sea, and there could be no doubt but that the enemy was being kept informed of the Grand Fleet's movements. And further proof of persistent air scouting was found by various auxiliary patrol vessels the same day. Thus H.M. trawler *Remexo*, which was protecting the fishing fleet in Lat. 56.43 N., Long. 1.25 E., engaged one of that airship line which ran east from Kinnaird Head. The armed yacht *Portia* and two armed trawlers tried to chase an airship which made off to the eastward. The armed yacht *Zoraide* did the same with L 31, and the armed trawler *Chikara* also fired at an air vessel, which turned immediately, enveloped herself in a cloud of smoke, and flew rapidly away.

We may now go back to the Heligoland Bight and watch the fascinating game which was

just beginning, and how the moves of the rival players were being flashed by wireless. At the very beginning of the war in 1914 there was stationed at Harwich a flotilla of British submarines. Now from August 5, 1914, with slight intermission, there was maintained by these underwater craft a valuable patrol in the Heligoland Bight, which was able to maintain a watch on the enemy's very front door, so to speak. Later on, a regular submarine patrol was instituted off Horns Reef, and eventually their wireless, with a radius of about 400 miles, enabled us to be kept well advised of enemy surface ships. Obviously no other kind of craft but one that could submerge in the sea, or make herself invisible in the air, was suitable for so important and continuous a vigil.

On August 16, 1916, the British submarine E 23 had left Harwich at 11 a.m., with orders to cruise for seven days in that area adjacent to the enemy waters which is marked by Latitudes 54 N. and 54.45 N., and Longitudes 4.30 E. and 5.30 E. After uneventfully crossing the North Sea, E 23 arrived on her patrol station by the early morning of August 17. We pass over the intervening hours and come to the early morning of August 19, when this

submarine was in Lat. 54.17, Long. 5.4 E., that is to say roughly N.W. of the Jade. It was now about 3 a.m., and she sighted Scheer's five units of the Battle-Cruiser Squadron steaming in single-line ahead on a course to the north of west. Having manœuvred into a suitable position, E 23 fired a torpedo at the leading ship, but the latter altered course, avoided the missile, and opened fire with her guns.

This caused our submarine to dive so hurriedly that she hit the bottom at 140 ft. The battle-cruisers passed on, E 23 rose and continued her observation; so that at 4 a.m. she saw the eight battleships of Scheer's Third Battle Squadron, approaching also in single-line formation; and thirty-seven minutes later the First Battle Squadron showed up too. Again E 23 manœuvred for a position, and exactly at 5 a.m. she was so favourably placed that she fired both her bow torpedoes at the rear ship of this last-mentioned squadron, and dived quickly to hide. She then listened-in with her hydrophones and heard the German screen of destroyers close to, but at 5.12 a.m. the submarine rose to 23 ft. and through her periscope saw the fruits of her effort. For there, with a heavy list to starboard, was the

battleship so seriously wounded that it would be many a long day before she would be seaworthy once more. Whilst the other German units continued on their course for Sunderland, the severely damaged battleship was headed about E.S.E. for home under the escort of eight destroyers. After following her for some time, E 23 fired two more torpedoes, and a heavy explosion was heard. At 7.35 a.m. the battleship was seen already to be deep in the water. Actually she got home without sinking, but thoroughly crippled.

Lieut.-Commander R. R. Turner, R.N., the submarine's captain, was afterwards given a D.S.O. for this successful incident; but not less valuable than his actual attack was the news which he was able to flash with his wireless. This reached Admiral Jellicoe in *Iron Duke* just after 10 a.m., made it clear that the High Sea Fleet was coming to the north and confirmed previous information signalled by our directional wireless stations that at least one of the enemy's fleet at 5.30 a.m. had been in the position where Commander Turner had hit the target.

Every hour of this August 19 now became of increasing interest. No one but the Germans knew whither the High Sea Fleet was bound,

but as *Iron Duke* continued on her southerly course Admiral Jellicoe surmised that Scheer's intention was to bombard the important ship-yards and buildings on the Tyne ; an extremely accurate discernment, seeing that the distance between Sunderland and the mouth of the Tyne is less than ten miles. The value of accurate and speedily despatched intelligence, giving the enemy's course and strength, was thus most excellently demonstrated. It enabled the British commander-in-chief to read the mind of his adversary and to make the requisite counter-moves. And here let it be mentioned that it was this high standard of naval intelligence which throughout the war was of the greatest help to the Grand Fleet. Not long after hostilities a well-known German naval expert bemoaned the fact that never could the High Sea Fleet start off on one of its expeditions than the British Admiralty immediately became acquainted with such invaluable knowledge.

Admiral Jellicoe, in forming his diagnosis of the situation, remembered that from the enemy's previous coastal raids he made the bombardment either just before dusk or at daylight (as in the Scarborough affair) ; and would then rush back homewards without

stopping to falter. The British *Admiralissimo* therefore chose a position where he would be likely to engage the enemy before the Germans made the coast, or, if the enemy should get through, where the latter might on the return journey be cut off from his bases. There was a possibility that this high sea outing was to cover a landing of troops. But in any of these alternatives there could be no better strategical position than Lat. 55 N., Long. 0.40 E., that is to say between seventy and eighty miles east of the Tyne. At noon the British Battle Fleet was still to the north of this position, and speed had been increased, but some slight delay was caused by having to avoid the enemy's line (1) of submarines. It was a further part of Admiral Jellicoe's strategy this forenoon to order the 11th Submarine Flotilla to spread on a line running North and South (True) from a position less than sixty miles east of the Tyne. The idea here was to enable our submarines to have plenty of room for waylaying the High Sea Fleet and yet be well to the westward of the Grand Fleet. The weather was beautifully clear, the prospect of a great battle seemed certain, and Admiral Jellicoe had arranged the detail of each two ships to fire in concentration on one

of the enemy, and altogether the conditions were as good as could be. At 1.45 p.m. the British Battle Fleet was still a little to the north and east (Lat. 55.15, Long. 1.0 E.) of the selected position, and it was estimated that the Germans might be sighted at any moment; for the enemy's approximate position at 12.30 p.m., ascertained by the directional wireless stations, was less than a hundred miles east of Whitby. And now the minutes of keen suspense ticked on as every one waited for the biggest battle in naval history to begin.

As we contemplate these rival and immense fleets tearing through the yellow, sandy waters towards each other, we think not so much of the millions of pounds sterling which they have cost, nor of the horrible death-dealing shells to be hurled. We know that inside grey steel hulls there is a wonderful picture of disciplined efficiency, there are highly specialised officers with their trained men ready at their stations to begin Armageddon at the given signal. The ships tremble as the turbines drive them furiously over the summer sea, and there is a concealed nervous tension in every human frame. How many ships and how many messmates will be alive at the end of the day? What madness has

possessed European civilisation that all the science, the mental skill, the seamanship, the organisation, the courage, the wealth, the enterprise of two naval nations have this day to be pitted against each other in a contest of wills? How is it going to help humanity in the future? What good can it all do for religion, art, literature, commerce, and human welfare in general? As a spectacle for the seagulls in their lofty poise, nothing since the beginning of time had ever been seen like all this maritime might, improved by the lessons of Jutland to an amazing pitch of proficiency, and now about to perform illuminating tactics that would be discussed for centuries afterwards. There was going to be no element of luck, such as fog or gale, to spoil a clear-cut issue. It was going to be a fight to the finish in the clear light of a summer's afternoon in glorious weather, affording the two rival Admirals the fullest opportunity to settle matters finally on behalf of their respective nations. Was ever a more thrilling crisis approaching in fiction or fact?

Let us fly south and view the scene through the seagull's eye.

On board Scheer's flagship the signal had come soon after 5 a.m. that *Westfalen*, his

rearmost battleship, had been torpedoed by a British submarine and turned homeward. One hour and a half later the airship L 13 in the vicinity of Harwich had sighted two British destroyer flotillas, with a cruiser squadron astern, bound up the North Sea. This was Commodore Tyrwhitt, who had come out with his Harwich force and at 10 a.m. was steaming past the Norfolk coast, and wirelessed his position to Admiral Jellicoe, shadowed by the airship. The German wireless station at Neuminster had already intercepted so many radio messages that it was able to wireless Scheer that the Grand Fleet was at sea. About this time L 21 sighted the Harwich force 'on a north-easterly course,' but already the climax was nearly reached.

That the late Admiral Scheer was an able commander-in-chief and clever tactician is well proven by the manner in which at Jutland he extricated his fleet from a dangerous situation. That he was a man who at the last stage of a big naval operation could completely cancel all the carefully laid arrangements of battle-cruisers, battleships, destroyers, submarines, and airships as quickly as he would change his coat is shown by his extraordinary *volte-face* on this August afternoon.

In a flash of time the whole of the Sunderland venture was washed from his brain, and he was committed to something entirely different. Certainly it shows an alert, quick-resolving mind, but lacking in stability. Was there a sense of nervousness begotten at Jutland? A last hour reluctance to go through with an appalling but inevitably short battle? For he knew now that he could scarcely avoid engagement with the Grand Fleet. Or was it the desire to make a brilliant and spectacular victory over light cruisers and torpedo craft?

These are the facts : At 12.22 p.m. he received a wireless message from L 13 that in the southern area of the North Sea she had sighted 'strong enemy forces comprising about thirty units, on a northerly course.' This was the peak of the day's decisiveness. Should he carry on to the Durham coast or swoop down on Tyrwhitt? He suddenly chose the latter. 'An opportunity,' explained Scheer, 'seemed to offer to attack hostile craft in the south. I had to seize it and not let it slip.' He therefore recalled his battle-cruisers, and, after they had re-formed, sent them ahead on a S.E. course in column formation. At 12.30 p.m. he again learnt from L 13 that Tyrwhitt was steering N. by E., and the German Admiral

appreciated the fact that if his fleet and the Harwich force continued on their respective courses they might expect to encounter each other in a couple of hours. Thus, from being within measurable distance of the Grand Fleet, the Germans were now about to be within range of a differently constituted and lighter fleet. Scheer therefore sent his scouting division and torpedo flotilla ahead to reconnoitre, and for the second time that day a battle seemed imminent.

But here once more the seagulls must have laughed at this strange game of craft in the sky, on the sea, and below. Scheer had pinned his faith to L 13: he had made his big new decision relying solely on her intelligence, and now during the ensuing critical couple of hours he needed that intelligence to be confirmed and filled in. Where was the Harwich force? How was it heading? In what formation? At what speed? The information was vital, its import was immediate. The airship was incurring a great responsibility, and there can be little doubt but that all the wirelessness about 12.30 p.m. when the High Sea Fleet turned from N.W. to S.E. had made it delightfully easy for our directional stations to get a 'fix' of Scheer's position. But at 1.50 p.m. the

unluckily numbered L 13, having been compelled to turn aside from her course so as to avoid thunderstorms, was able only to report the extremely unsatisfactory news that she had lost all touch with the Harwich force. And that contact was never regained.

In this wise, then, was an historic occasion spoiled. 'Either the enemy had changed his course . . .' explained the German commander-in-chief, 'or the airship, owing to its unreliable navigation, had incorrectly reported his position.' At any rate, the two forces did not meet, and there had been the curious occurrence of either of two sea battles being frustrated by a gas-bag in the sky. At one time the distance between the respective battle fleets of Jellicoe and Scheer had been only a matter of 42 miles, Lord Jellicoe has himself stated. 'While the [High Sea] Fleet,' remarked Admiral Scheer, 'was moving in a south-easterly direction, reports came in from U 35, and two airships, L 11 and L 31, which indicated that strong enemy forces had assembled at a spot about 60 nautical miles north of our course and . . . would have met the main portion of our Fleet had it held on its course.'

As time went on and no further reports came in concerning the Germans by 2.30 p.m., it

became clear to Admiral Jellicoe that the High Sea Fleet had turned back home, so at 2.35 p.m. he wirelessly directed Commodore Tyrwhitt to steer for a position north-west of Terschelling, with the object of delivering a night attack on the returning enemy. The Harwich force was strong in destroyers, and night-time is essentially the chance for these mosquitoes to sting big ships. At 2.45 p.m. the enemy's position had been fixed by the directional stations as between eighty and ninety miles E. by N. of Flamborough, so there was no question now but that he was proceeding no longer N.W. but S.E. And therefore at 3.40 p.m. the Grand Fleet began to turn back home for their northern bases, though not without anxiety from submarines.

For U 53 had been following the British Fleet until 2.30 p.m., when she lost sight of them as they were steaming south, though again met them at 7 p.m., when they were coming home on a N.W. course. Until darkness set in the submarine trap was very active, for U 66, which at 3 p.m. had watched the Grand Fleet heading S.E., encountered them just two hours later returning; and when about fifty miles N.E. of Flamborough she got in a favourable position to make H.M.S.

Falmouth her target. *Falmouth* was one of the Third Light Cruiser Squadron. She was steaming at 23 knots and she was also zigzagging; nevertheless U 66 got one torpedo in forward and one aft on the starboard side. The submarine also from now on had an unpleasant time, for she was kept under water during two hours, and when she showed her periscope she just saved herself from being rammed by the destroyer *Pelican*. The latter then dropped six depth charges, which exploded with such effect that every electric globe in U 66 was smashed, her hatch covers burst open, though closed again by pressure of the water. Until dark she was still chased by destroyers, when she escaped, but thoroughly shaken up, with her crew badly jolted too.

Falmouth was eventually taken in tow by four tugs which had been summoned, and escorted by nine destroyers, but next day, whilst proceeding slowly, was again hit by two more torpedoes, and at 8 p.m., August 20, finally sank just seven and a half miles south of Flamborough Head. The assailant this time was U 63, for the stricken cruiser had now run into the trap of line (2). This submarine was promptly hunted by the destroyers, and was admittedly slightly rammed, but no

serious damage was done. She was lucky, like her sister U 66, to have escaped by the narrowest of margins. It was unfortunate that *Falmouth* should have foundered before reaching the Humber, but it is a terribly slow business trying to get a vessel into port under such circumstances, and, notwithstanding the escort, the damaged vessel is a most tempting target. I remember in the following April, on a glorious spring day, helping to get a steamer of 4,470 tons into harbour. She had been torpedoed and shelled just before I reached her, and all her crew had gone away in boats. She was a brute to tow, sheering wildly like a sailing boat which keeps tacking every few minutes. It took us eight hours to tow her twenty miles and there was an escort eventually of several armed craft; but I distinctly remember noticing how easy it would have been for an enterprising U-boat to have got one or two fairly close shots and given the steamer her knock-out blow.

As the Grand Fleet went steaming up the North Sea, frequent submarine reports were received, and Admiral Beatty by 6 p.m. on August 19 had realised the existence of the Flamborough line (2) of U-boats, which he believed to extend north-east for twenty-five

miles, and the armed trawler *Gunner* sighted one of these next day. And it was the destroyer *Porpoise* which that day nearly finished the career of U 63. Whilst escorting *Falmouth*, this destroyer sighted a periscope on the starboard bow crossing to port, so the helm was starboarded, the engine telegraphs put to full speed, and she was already up to 19 knots when she collided with the submarine; but just at that moment the two fatal torpedoes struck *Falmouth*. On being subsequently examined in dock, *Porpoise* was found to have received slight damage.

At 7.50 p.m. the battle-cruiser *Inflexible* had two torpedoes fired at her by U 65, which was one of the trap submarines of the Northumbrian line (1). Fortunately both missiles passed astern, though dangerously close. The Grand Fleet got back to its northern bases, but it had lost two valuable light cruisers and narrowly escaped the loss of capital ships, without having once seen so much as the smoke of the enemy's fleet. Thus Scheer's plan had partially succeeded in its main object, although the secondary intention of shelling Sunderland had been abandoned. On the other hand, he had lost—at any rate for some weeks—the use of an important capital ship

in *Westfalen*, though not permanently out of action.

Now from the reports wirelessly by U 53 (which had followed the Grand Fleet till about 2.30 p.m.) and by the airship L 31 (which had been sighted by the armed yacht *Zoraide* well to seaward of the Firth of Forth) Admiral Scheer was able to learn that Admiral Jellicoe had turned N.W. about 4 p.m. An hour later the High Sea Fleet was about half-way across the North Sea (Lat. 54.16, Long. 2.51 E.). It would have seemed to any watchful seagull that an action with the Harwich force was now pending. For at 6.7 p.m. Commodore Tyrwhitt wirelessly that he was following an enemy's force of heavy ships steering east, and that it was accompanied by two Zeppelins. Scheer about this time was keeping in sight six of Tyrwhitt's light cruisers and two destroyer flotillas which were just visible on the horizon and were maintaining a course parallel with the Germans. Scheer inferred that this Harwich force 'would keep in touch with us until there was a chance of making a night attack. I had to decide whether or not,' Scheer afterwards recorded, 'I should send our light cruisers and torpedo-boats against them to drive them off, and I

relinquished the idea of doing so, because I reckoned that the English would have the advantage of us in speed. Moreover, I thought that, after our lucky experience on the night of June 1st, I might run the risk of a combined night attack.'

It is thus perfectly established that the German commander-in-chief was not in the mood, after an anxious day's excursion round the North Sea, to engage in a night action. Now Commodore Tyrwhitt, although he had established visual contact, was of the opinion that the conditions on this light, short summer's night were not favourable for launching an attack against heavily armed capital ships. Before 7.30 p.m. he therefore gave up the pursuit, and began returning with his force to Harwich. The airship L 11, which had come south-east from her Sunderland area, and was still reconnoitring, was able to inform Scheer that the Harwich units had turned away from the chase, and, two hours later, that they had disappeared entirely from view.

So all three fleets got home without firing a shot. It had been a curious and remarkable day, which ought to have become historic, but just failed so to do because of inadequate

news. It will always be remembered as having caused considerable disappointment in the Grand Fleet, which was so well placed off the Tyne to fight that action which had been left indecisive at Jutland. The Battle of the Tyne might have saved all need for the heavy bloodshed in France of the next two years, and have broken German naval strength so that the U-boat campaign of 1917 (which nearly lost us the war) would never have been waged. There would have been no food shortage, and the entrance of the United States into the war would not have occurred. So at least it may be said that L 13 unintentionally was able to modify the trend of the world's history.

But from this summer's day both sides learned valuable lessons. Admiral Scheer said that his lesson was that the disposition of U-boats in a movable line was a successful trap, and more advantageous than stationing them outside British ports of issue. He found, also, that they made excellent scouts. The German commander-in-chief, however, professed that the airship scouting was only partially successful. Nevertheless, the reader will by now have convinced himself that—given adequate protection by an escort of

battle-planes—well-placed airships over such wide areas as the Pacific or Indian Ocean could be of the greatest utility in keeping a commander-in-chief informed of the enemy's surface ships. In the North Sea on August 19 these eight airships were able to act as they liked because they were never attacked by airplanes, and their cruising area was comparatively small; but for ocean work over the high seas it is probable that in the next war they will be employed on reconnaissance work, not merely for a fleet of fighting naval ships, but to warn convoys of merchantmen from the enemy's light cruisers.

To the British Navy the August adventure presented unmistakable lessons likewise. 'The experience of August 19th,' was Admiral Jellicoe's opinion, 'showed that light cruisers, proceeding at even the highest speed, unscreened by destroyers, ran considerable danger from enemy submarines. . . . The ease with which the enemy could lay a submarine trap for the Fleet had been demonstrated.' The torpedoing of *Falmouth* and of the enemy's *Westfalen* had also proved that even destroyer escort is no infallible protection. So this remarkable day was more like a full-dress rehearsal of some unique naval manœuvres

than an episode in the world's greatest war, and we may leave it at that.

Nor was this the final appearance of the High Sea Fleet. On October 10 of that year it advanced as far as the centre of the North Sea, and on April 24, 1918, it made another unsuccessful expedition up that area. And then in the autumn it steamed across to the Firth of Forth for its surrender.

Such, one must end, is our last yarn in the present volume showing ships and sailors actively engaged on the high seas and employed in all sorts of service. The sea is ever changing, yet always unchanged; the seaman has altered in centuries less than is suspected, and in a manner far less than his ships have changed. The old war goes on in peace time as in those sharp periods of international strife, and till the crack of doom the greatest of all dramas will continue to be waged afloat between nature's wind and waves contending against man in his ships.

THE END



BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

In regard to certain facts presented in these chapters, I desire to acknowledge my indebtedness to Monson's *Naval Tracts*, the *Catalogue of the Pepysian MSS.*, and Sir Henry Mainwaring's writings—all published by the Navy Records Society; to the two volumes on the Grand Fleet and the High Sea Fleet written, respectively, by Admiral Earl Jellicoe and the late Admiral Scheer; to Mr. Pink, who was kind enough to make researches for me among the archives of St. Helena; and to many sources either unpublished in manuscript or long since forgotten in print.



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